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# **PREACHING AS SPIRIT-DIRECTED WITNESS**

by

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THESIS

Submitted to the Faculty of Waterloo Lutheran Seminary  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Theology in Homiletics

2008

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## ABSTRACT

This study seeks to address two specific areas that have been comparatively neglected in modern homiletical writings. Firstly, there has been a reticence to view preaching as witness—which has resulted in what one perceptive homiletician has called “a testimonial vacuum” in much of the preaching that is done in the mainstream churches of the west; and secondly, there has been a scarcity of emphasis on the role of the Holy Spirit in theological writing, including in the crucial area of preaching. Happily, this is beginning to change: there is more and more material being written now in the area of Pneumatology, including challenges to consider other branches of theology *through* a well-developed doctrine of the Holy Spirit—such as an “ecclesiology of the Spirit,” for example. In seeking to understand better who we truly are as preachers of the gospel, this study offers the category of “witness” as one which (it is hoped) will be regarded as worthy of serious consideration. We believe that an understanding of “preaching-as-witness” will be most beneficial—for we contend that the earliest Christian preachers saw themselves as “preaching witnesses.”

When one brings together the concept of appropriating the Spirit’s direction and power in preaching with the concomitant and resulting concept of the preacher-as-witness, the possibilities for positive results in church and society are both exciting and far-reaching. What has too often been regarded and experienced as an unpleasant chore can, by personally welcoming the *Advent* of the Spirit into the preaching process, become an *adventure*—in all senses of the word. In the following pages we present the case, in considering the findings and experiences of certain preachers of the past (including those at the very beginning of our Christian story in *Acts*), that the creativity, vitality, and overall effectiveness of preaching can be optimized through a strong personal connection with the Power-Source who is the Holy Spirit. In this W/way, the words that are needed will be the words that are said, and the message that is communicated in our preaching will be an effective witness to Jesus as Lord and Christ.

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- 
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## FRONTISPIECE

“[W]hat I have occasionally contemplated for here and now . . . would be the possibility of a theology of the third article, in other words, a theology predominantly and decisively of the Holy Spirit. Everything which needs to be said, considered and believed about God the Father and God the Son in an understanding of the first and second articles might be shown and illuminated in its foundations through God the Holy Spirit.”

— Karl Barth, cited in the frontispiece of Frank D. Macchia’s *Baptized in the Spirit: A Global Pentecostal Theology*

“Clearly, there is a ‘testimonial vacuum’ in mainstream homiletics.... And just as clearly, there is a deeper message about testimony implicit in this vacuum that the centrist voices in homiletics intend to send: this is not a suitable practice for serious preachers. It may be biblical; it may be historical; it may even be taking place in churches or prayer meetings or youth groups in our own backyards; but it is not proper in the mainline. Testimony, in other words, does not fit those who fit the system.”

— Anna Carter Florence, naming the “reticence” that exists in the field of homiletics “to address testimony [or witness] as both theory and practice,” in her dissertation *Preaching As Testimony*



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## INTRODUCTION

In the wake of a period in which discussions about seeker-sensitivity have abounded (and these do have their place), there is a need, once again, to encourage *Spirit*-sensitivity. In any concern where persuasiveness is crucial—and preaching is certainly such a concern—it is our belief that the Spirit needs to be named, and that a focus on the Spirit needs to be emphasized and recommended. There may still be a host of preachers who are not availing themselves of this power that Jesus promised his followers in his final conversations with them. It can spell the difference between inadequacy and effectiveness. If preaching involves spiritual and psychological combat (and our research and experience convince us that it does), then we do well to remember that we can enter the battle—whether it is Sunday morning (or Monday morning or Saturday night), with a decisive advantage: a friendly guiding Power that is supernatural, and sufficient—indeed, *more* than sufficient to enable us to be victorious—and to accomplish the task (Romans 8:37; 2 Corinthians 2:14; 3:4–6). The English translator of Martin Luther’s great hymn said it well when he penned the phrase ‘The Spirit and the gifts are ours, through Him who with us sideth.’ We were neither created—nor called to the preaching ministry—to ‘go it alone.’ And we don’t have to (Romans 8:31b).

One voice expressing appreciation for the role of the Holy Spirit in Christian experience and in the preaching ministry is that of the Reformer Martin Bucer. His line of thinking, which includes helpful distinctions (such as *visible* word and *audible* or oral word, and *outward* and *inward* word), is our focus in the early portion of *chapter one*. The balance of the chapter concerns itself with John Calvin’s ‘middle-path’ theology of preaching. The Geneva reformer, like Bucer (his one-time mentor), stresses the importance of the Spirit in the preaching process and in the preaching event. On the one hand, preachers ought not take the presence and working of the Spirit ‘for granted’ as they preach Christ, but they can be ‘assured,’ on the other hand that, as God pleases, the illumining and enlivening Spirit will be given to the human words of the message. Thus, while preachers dare not be assumptive, they can preach confidently, in the awareness that they are God’s authoritative spokespersons. However, both preachers and hearers need the illumination of the Spirit to understand and receive the life-giving Word (Christ) in the gospel. For this, after all, is one of the central objectives of preaching.

*In chapter two* we ‘fast-forward’ from the sixteenth to the twentieth century in order to consider two of the few voices in modern homiletical theory who have reflected at length on the role of the Spirit in preaching. The first of these, J. Ithel Jones, although not of the Pentecostal tradition, emphasizes the importance of what he calls “intensity,” and of “somehow translating” the “manifestation of power” evident at Pentecost into contemporary preaching. The Holy Spirit, explains Jones, can aid us not only in *what* to say but in *how* to say it. By enlisting the Spirit’s help, preachers can be sure that both the content and delivery of their sermons will be significantly enhanced. Highlighting truths conveyed in the opening portion of Isaiah 61 (which is quoted in the NT at Luke 4:18f.), James A. Forbes, Jr. focuses on the importance of the Spirit’s anointing in Christian proclamation—in keeping with the emphasis on this reality in Jesus’ preaching (as reported by Luke). Indeed, as Forbes puts it, what makes Jesus the *Christ* is the Spirit’s anointing upon his life; and what enables *Christians* to minister effectively (especially those claiming a call to speak the word of Christ) is the anointing of the same Spirit! In other words, Forbes’ approach stresses the point that the anointing that Jesus experienced “can be viewed as a model of spiritual formation” *for us*. This pastor-homiletician is persuaded that the appropriation of the Spirit’s anointing is the key to effective, prophetic preaching: it will enable ordinary, otherwise-weak human beings to bear faithful and true witness to Jesus Christ. The anointing is, he claims, “a plus-factor”—an “edge” that we need in order to “break traditional moulds” and to be strong and effective in our Christian witness. Hence, whether we are dealing with sermon preparation or actually delivering the discourse, “collaborating with the Spirit” can ease our anxiety and direct us in the task, making what is all too often an exercise in drudgery into *an enjoyable experience*.

Just as the first two chapters focus on bringing balance to homiletical thought by stressing something too long neglected, namely the importance of the Holy Spirit’s role in preaching, so *chapters three and four* emphasize the value of regarding preaching as testimony or witness. This too has been neglected, says homiletician Anna Carter Florence. As we noted in the frontispiece (above), centrist homiletical writers have intimated that “testimony [or witness] is not a suitable practice for serious preachers.” Florence urges us to reconsider this de-valuing of testimony and to recognize it as an avenue which can open up opportunities for voices that have traditionally been barred from speaking officially and prophetically on Christ’s behalf. No doubt Florence would appreciate the

thought that the modern state of Israel roughly doubles its army through the simple practice of enlisting and involving the women too! In keeping with this thought, we include, in summary fashion, Florence's account of the remarkable preaching ministry of a marginalized person living in pre-Civil-War America—a black woman named Jarena Lee. This preaching-woman testifies to the experience of speaking under the Spirit's anointing—an experience which liberates her from the 'fear of man' (as she puts it) and brings her into a mindset in which she is filled with great courage and boldness to speak. In her preaching-witness, she testifies *for* the gospel's freedom and *against* the strictures of certain social structures in America. In the process, Lee (Florence shows) is "testing the limits of traditional roles and stereotypes." Lee also reasons that because of the success of "her poor labours" (in seeing people converted in her meetings), God has truly called her to preach. This is a corollary of the reasoning that holds that there will be divine effectiveness if one's witness is directed by the Spirit. In this third chapter we also introduce the concept of partnering with God in the preaching ministry—which is only feasible through the Spirit's help and agency. In general, though, while Florence certainly focuses on the importance of seeing preaching as testimony or witness, she only rarely emphasizes the role of the Spirit in her own analysis and argument.

*Chapter four* discusses various important facets of preaching-as-witness. In *his* approach Bernard Cooke goes back farther in history than Anna Carter Florence—he analyses the concept of witness in a biblical context, pointing out that Jesus is the 'supreme' witness to God's saving act, and that witness naturally involves 'a ministry of the word.' Cooke makes a point of emphasizing that along with certain other charismatic dimensions, a basic feature of Christian witness is its prophetic nature. What is more, this prophetic dimension is one in which there can (at least potentially) be very wide participation. That the Spirit can bring a depth of inspiration and a certain spontaneity to the preacher in the preaching moment is also emphasized in this chapter, more especially in the section on the so-called holistic approach to preaching characteristic of the Black tradition and also typical in Pentecostal preaching. Finally, the chapter gives an example of the Spirit initiating a charismatic meeting-of-minds-and-hearts through the unique, ecumenical ministry of one of the forerunners (and frontline witnesses) of the charismatic renewal in the middle of the twentieth century—namely South African church leader

David du Plessis, affectionately known and remembered (in several ecclesial traditions) as ‘Mr. Pentecost.’

*Chapter five* focuses directly on the work of Luke, whom we present as a theologian in his own right—and a charismatic one at that. It is known that Luke gives much more place to the work of the Holy Spirit than the other Synoptic writers, and we feel justified in including Luke as a theologian, for he is doing more than merely recounting events (as we might expect a news reporter to do). In recounting the witness and working of the Holy Spirit in the early church Luke is doing the work of a theologian: he is speaking of the witnessing activity of the Spirit, of the action of God in the world; and he is doing so with a didactic purpose (Luke 1:4). Charles H. Talbert notes that it is “still too early” to say what the “final shape” of interpretive methodology regarding Lucan studies will be, but he guesses that it will be a combination of various elements, including those found in modern literary (and genre) criticisms, and “the type of comparative study now being done in Acts.” In any case, Talbert hints that the long-standing redaction-critical approach will be “superseded.”<sup>1</sup> What is offered here is an alternative interpretation of Luke’s writings—one which seeks to present a case for the unity of the documents based on the almost pervasive charismatic, pneumatological elements and themes in the text. For that reason we deliberately emphasize the view presented by Roger Stronstad, who stresses the *charismatic* nature of Luke’s theology. A crucial assumption for the present study is that in Luke-Acts we have reliable documents that intend to reveal (respectively, and in a substantially transparent way) how Jesus, and later his earliest apostles, saw and understood themselves and the world. Besides presenting Jesus as the Spirit-anointed and Spirit-directed witness *par excellence*, Luke shows how the apostles and others present at the first Christian Pentecost become the “charismatic successors” of the ministry of Jesus. The prime witness, so to speak, becomes at Pentecost (and so it has been ever since) *the One being witnessed to*. Jesus is proclaimed as Lord and Christ; and the Source of the message’s dynamism is the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Charles H. Talbert, “Luke-Acts,” in Eldon Jay Epp and George W. MacRae, eds., *The New Testament and its Modern Interpreters* (Philadelphia: Fortress; and Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 297–320. Talbert writes: “The thrust of the ‘new look’ in Lucan studies [is] that, at the very least, Luke-Acts reflects the faith of its author and of his community. In contrast to the views of . . . an earlier time, today’s scholar sees Luke-Acts not as the product of a historian’s careful work but as *the composition of a preacher or theologian*. At the very least, Luke is viewed as theologically interpreted tradition. At the extreme, Acts is regarded as a religiously motivated historical romance, an early Christian novel.” 311. Emphasis added. The present study presents Luke-Acts as propounding a charismatic theology of the Spirit.

In *chapter six* we offer a proposal for the enhancement of Christian preaching, with particular emphasis on the dynamism referred to above, and on the boldness available to us when we enlist the help of the Spirit through prayer. Here too we attempt to show the link between the Spirit's empowerment of ordinary believers and the missional and evangelizing purpose of God in Christ. In addition, this chapter mentions the possibility of preachers coming into a sense of authority and competency—not at all because of their own skill, but because of their conscious and prayerful enlisting of the Spirit's power and authority. The idea is that once we have grown in a sense of the Spirit's solidarity with us, we can then also grow in our sense of solidarity with Christ and his authoritative message. It is our hope to show that as preachers of the gospel we are divinely-authorized delegates—ambassadors, so to speak, of Christ and his kingdom, representatives of the Age-to-come while still in this present age. In the closing section of the chapter we include a striking example of the authoritative witness of the Spirit, brought about by the Spirit in partnership with praying Christians to effect growth in the church of Christ in an area where Christianity was introduced comparatively recently—namely South Korea.

In the *final chapter* we make some observations about the desires and preferences of the Spirit's witnessing. We make the claim that the Spirit 'gravitates' toward preachers of specific mindsets and dispositions—and even toward certain geographical and social settings. For instance, we have stated that the Spirit longs to work in areas of human need, and that the Spirit also gravitates toward areas where there is spiritual hunger. We conclude with a brief discussion of the far-sighted wish of Moses which (in our view) anticipates the effusion of the Spirit among God's people in the first century (and again in the twentieth). Our final observations focus on the desire of Jesus (expressed in his prayer recorded in John 17) that the witness of his disciples be strengthened and made effective through the unifying power of love—a love made possible and visible through the agency and direction of the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5).

We have made an attempt in our discussion to use language that is as inclusive as possible, but quoted material (most of which dates from earlier decades and centuries) has in most instances been left unchanged. It is our aim (in the pages that follow) to encourage an appropriation of the Spirit's power and direction and to demonstrate that viewing preaching as Spirit-directed witness can significantly benefit preachers by

enabling them to re-vision themselves as voices in God's prophetic succession, and that such an approach to preaching can also benefit the church's word-ministry by expanding it to involve and empower many more voices among the people of God—all of which will result in more effective Christian witness in the world.

We begin the journey by first turning our attention to a couple of influential preaching voices in what was in many respects a time of new beginnings—namely the Protestant Reformation in Europe.



## CHAPTER ONE

### THE SPIRIT'S ROLE IN PREACHING: TWO REFORMERS' VIEWS

#### 1.1. Martin Bucer's Pneumatology of Preaching

For Martin Bucer (1491–1551), as for the other reformers, the Holy Spirit and the Bible possess greater authority than the church. W.P. Stephens summarizes Bucer's stance on the point of scriptural authority as follows: "The Bible is the only certain word of the Holy Spirit over against every human word, of theologian or philosopher, of church father or church council. Moreover, in it the Holy Spirit has given all that is necessary to salvation. Here lies its authority—that it is from the Holy Spirit and is sufficient for salvation."<sup>1</sup> The scriptural canon, explains Bucer, was decided "under the guidance of the indwelling Spirit of God."<sup>2</sup> It is in his Cologne debate with Catholic opponents, says Stephens, that Bucer concludes that "each generation must recognise the canon afresh. It is to be accepted not on the authority of the early church (for that would make the Bible subservient to the church), but by the test of the word and the Spirit."<sup>3</sup> It becomes clear then that for the Strasbourg Reformer "[t]he church (whether in council or through her ministers) does not possess the power to give men a true understanding of the Bible. The Holy Spirit alone can give this understanding, for only the Spirit of God can understand the things of God. The Spirit, however, is not the possession of so-called spiritual persons, that is, priests and monks, but belongs to all Christians."<sup>4</sup> Stephens then quotes Bucer directly:

Pray God the Father through Christ our Saviour for his grace and enlightenment. Do so with firm faith, and you will obtain it and learn sufficiently everything which it is necessary and needful for you to know. *The Spirit of God rests on the humble and has a gracious regard for the poor who has a broken spirit and who trembles at the word of God.* Even if you are not a priest or monk, have no Latin, and must work day and night [as Paul often did], Jesus our Saviour was also a layman; in the eyes of the world . . . he was uneducated and a carpenter.<sup>5</sup>

Bucer mentions Nicodemus as one who was learned in the Scriptures and yet unenlightened by the Spirit.<sup>6</sup> In footnote 7, Stephens quotes an even more pointed statement by Bucer: "[A]lthough we may have the scriptures and the church as well, even

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<sup>1</sup> W.P. Stephens, *The Holy Spirit in Martin Bucer's Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 138.

<sup>2</sup> BW 2.98.23–9; referenced by Stephens, *op. cit.*, 141.

<sup>3</sup> Stephens, 141.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 142.

<sup>5</sup> BW 1.85.11–24; quoted by Stephens, 143. My emphasis.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. fn. 4, Stephens, 143.

Christ himself bodily as preacher, if the Spirit does not at the same time (*damit*) teach inwardly, then we remain indeed completely without understanding, as happened to the Pharisees and Sadducees, who heard Christ himself expound the scriptures.’<sup>7</sup> In his commentary on *Ephesians*, however, Bucer confronts “those who want to learn everything from the Spirit. God, he argues, does not teach us by a miracle any more than feed us by a miracle. We have to prepare food, similarly we have to prepare by study.”<sup>8</sup> For Bucer the biblical languages have substantial importance, especially for would-be Bible teachers. In fact, he refers to Hebrew as the language of the Holy Spirit! (He would probably say the same of NT Greek.)<sup>9</sup> To interpret the Bible with good understanding, the Spirit’s guidance is needed. As Stephens points out, “The important thing [for Bucer] is not the sense which the given words [of a text] may show, but the sense which the person who spoke or wrote wished. The discovering of this is possible only for someone who is guided by the Spirit[.]”<sup>10</sup> For example, Bucer considers the man a slave to the letter of the Bible who forbids his children to call him ‘Father’ because Jesus made a statement to the effect that we should call no one on earth ‘Father.’ In fact, Bucer might regard such a person as a fanatic. The freedom of the Spirit would lead one to understand that Christ was here teaching that we should recognize God as our true Source, our ultimate Father, and that we should seek Him and our inheritance in heaven above all. The child of God and friend of Christ, says Bucer, will (with the Spirit’s direction and wisdom) understand both *what* is said and *why* it is said.<sup>11</sup>

At the Bern disputation, held in January of 1528, Bucer clarified some of his basic views concerning the debate about the Spirit and the word. His biographer, M. Greschat, summarizes these as follows: “[F]aith is all that counts, the Holy Spirit is of central importance; decisive for church unity is that all agree on the doctrine of justification—everything else can be tolerated . . . there is no other fundamental criterion other than the Bible; people become convinced of its truth through the work of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>12</sup> This was his line of thinking. How crucial the role of the Spirit is for Bucer becomes still clearer in the following statement made to the preachers from Zurich some years earlier: he points

<sup>7</sup> BW 2.83.18–22; noted by Stephens, 143–44.

<sup>8</sup> E 6.A.26–B.6; referenced by Stephens, 146.

<sup>9</sup> P 4.B.42–7 (Preface); referenced by Stephens, 146.

<sup>10</sup> Stephens, 149–50.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 150–51.

<sup>12</sup> Martin Greschat, *Martin Bucer: A Reformer and His Times*. Trans. by Stephen E. Buckwalter. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2004), 79.

out that the biblical norm is “only one side” of the matter. He declares that ‘if the Holy Spirit is not instructing our hearts, Scripture can also become the letter that kills.’<sup>13</sup>

Stephens concludes the discussion of the Buceran relationship of the Spirit to the Bible with the following summary:

*In Bucer’s understanding of the Bible[,] the word and the Spirit are essentially joined. The Bible is from the Spirit and, therefore, its words are the words of the Spirit. There lies its authority. It is recognized as of the Spirit by the power of the indwelling Spirit and by comparison with the word (in this case the Old Testament). It is understood by the Spirit and without him it is dead, mere letter.*<sup>14</sup>

The author goes on to say that it is also “interpreted by the Spirit,” i.e., by those who are guided by the Spirit. By comparing scripture with scripture, they allow “the Holy Spirit himself to interpret what he has written. In this way the authority of scripture remains supreme, as it is not dependent on man for its true interpretation but on the Holy Spirit himself.”<sup>15</sup>

### 1.1.1. The Spirit and the Preached Word

That Bucer valued the preaching of the word as well as the written word of scripture is clear from the fact that with the abolition of the mass in Strasbourg (early in 1529), he and his colleagues proceeded to establish in the city’s churches *Predigtgottesdienste* (worship services centred on sermons).<sup>16</sup> With no little passion, Bucer clarifies his theology of preaching: to ‘convey’ merely ‘the contents’ of the Bible is not enough; ministers ‘should, in all earnestness, preach the scripture about Christ our Saviour, by the assistance of the Holy Spirit sent from the Father, so that the Father may work with them and make what they plant and water, grow.’<sup>17</sup> Note the emphasis Bucer places on the Spirit’s aid in the preaching task: it is the Spirit who speaks through the minister and who makes the preaching effective or fruitful.<sup>18</sup> Hence, for Bucer, ministers engaged in preaching and teaching the Word, are the Father’s ‘fellow-workers.’ To communicate divine truth, ministers are God’s regular instruments. To be sure, the Holy Spirit can teach the elect *directly* (without

<sup>13</sup> *Correspondance de Martin Bucer*, Vol. 1, no. 63, p. 233, ll. 230–31. Ed. by Jean Rott et al. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1979–); quoted by Greschat, 79.

<sup>14</sup> Stephens., 155. My italics.

<sup>15</sup> Stephens, 155.

<sup>16</sup> Greschat, 116. The biographer later adds that “the right preaching of God’s Word” was, for Martin Bucer, a principal “defining characteristic” of the church. 241.

<sup>17</sup> BW 2.136.24–30; quoted by Stephens, 174.

<sup>18</sup> Stephens, 174.

signs or preacher), but normally the Spirit uses the words of the preacher, and the signs that are used in worship services.<sup>19</sup>

Ministers are aided by the Spirit to face hardship (including persecution) and are given a “propensity” for their work. Because of the hardships which often attend the preaching of the gospel, says Bucer, “[I]t is most necessary that [preachers] be clothed with power from on high...that is that they have the Paraclete. He adds not only consolation to the afflicted, but also courage to the timid and to those by nature terrified of death...so that intrepidly they announce to all Christ as king...”<sup>20</sup> Along with the bold verbalization of the gospel, Bucer also stresses the importance of the preacher’s manner and conduct. Even regarding the value of *ēthos* (i.e., credibility of reputation and character), the Strasbourg reformer is clear: the minister’s life “may help or hinder the preaching.”<sup>21</sup> He states: “[W]here the most holy word of God is taught coldly, and when the preacher’s whole life cries out that he does not sufficiently believe it, what wonder if it draws very few or none at all?”<sup>22</sup> Hence, it is crucial for Bucer that ministers be people of the Spirit—people who are guided by the Spirit and who exhibit the character traits that the Spirit enables. He reasons that Spirit-empowered preachers will be credible witnesses. It becomes clear that for Bucer the Holy Spirit helps preachers in all facets of their work. As Stephens notes, it is the Spirit who “sustains” God’s ministers, enabling them to “testify of Christ” and to persuade their hearers. Actually, the task of convincing or persuading belongs ultimately to the Spirit, explains Bucer, for “[w]ithout his persuasion the word is dead.”<sup>23</sup>

Because human life has both an inward and outward aspect, God has been pleased to use the outward ministry to accomplish the purposes of the gospel. Preaching is described as the outward word; the fellowship of the church is also outward and visible; and so are baptism and communion.<sup>24</sup> Yet, in Bucer’s system, preaching is also meant to be more than a human action. In what sense are ministers “ministers of the Spirit”? Bucer replies: “[T]hey do not [serve] . . . in their own strength, but in the power and energy of the Lord. *Of themselves they could not think of doing this, but God equips them for it. For that reason the Lord gives them his Spirit and understanding of scripture. His Spirit speaks in*

<sup>19</sup> Stephens, 175.

<sup>20</sup> 79.A.16–25; 26.B.21–C.2; 63.A.10–16; quoted by Stephens, 176.

<sup>21</sup> Stephens, 177.

<sup>22</sup> 2.B.20–3; 82.D.7–8; 208.D.1–3; quoted by Stephens, 177.

<sup>23</sup> Stephens, 175–76

<sup>24</sup> BH K.1.A.1–9; cf. the added quote in footnote 3, as noted by Stephens, 179.

*them*. It is his power, his Spirit, and his work. He gives the increase.”<sup>25</sup> Here, as in other matters, Bucer tries to maintain a balanced, middle position. He (in Stephen’s phrasing) “seeks a middle way between those who despise the [official] ministry [i.e., the radicals], and [the traditionalist clerics], who bind salvation to it and so destroy faith.”<sup>26</sup> As agents of the Spirit, ministers do more than proclaim—they remit and forgive; they offer salvation, they baptize, they lead their hearers into a new life of fellowship with God.<sup>27</sup> In sum, then, preachers are engaged in what is “primarily a divine activity;” they are called to serve as ministers of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>28</sup>

Although the Strasbourg reformer seems at times to down-play the importance of the preaching task, it is important to add that such comments are made “in comparison with what God does,”<sup>29</sup> i.e., the inward teaching of the Spirit, which is essential. To be sure, the outward and inward teaching/preaching, as Stephens remarks, “are not normally separated.” He goes on: “God uses the outward word, though he has on occasion dispensed with it. God is not bound to the outward word, so that he cannot act apart from it, nor does the outward word of itself convey the Spirit—otherwise salvation would be made dependent on man.”<sup>30</sup>

Nonetheless, God uses human witnesses. Just as Cornelius was helped by the witness and preaching of Peter, and Paul himself was aided by Ananias, so God has chosen to use preachers throughout history, whether in the early church, or in the Reformation period, or in our own day. Bucer mentions the above examples of Spirit-directed witness from *Acts* and also states: ‘Christ can convert whom he will, without my preaching, but he wishes to use my ministry in doing so, as well with deeds as with words.’<sup>31</sup> In some Bible passages Bucer sees the Spirit following the word; in others their working is simultaneous, and there is even a reference suggesting “a prior operation of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>32</sup>

<sup>25</sup> BW 7.110.14–19; quoted by Stephens, 183.] My italics.

<sup>26</sup> EE 96.E.10–15; referenced by Stephens, 184.

<sup>27</sup> Stephens quotes Bucer: ‘[A] prince’s servant renders a prisoner more sure of the favour his prince has done to him, if he leads him out of prison with his own hand, than if he merely announces it to him.’ *Tomus Anglicanus* 593.27–33; quoted by Stephens, 184. The author adds: “The Holy Spirit is also not bound to the ministry, in the sense that he cannot act apart from the ministry, though this note is more characteristic of Bucer’s earlier writings than his later ones.” 185

<sup>28</sup> Stephens, 177.

<sup>29</sup> BW 2.85.18–20; referenced by Stephens, 198.

<sup>30</sup> Stephens, 198.

<sup>31</sup> BW 1.223.13–15; cf. also 50.B.25–51.A.5; 17.B.2–6; 40.C.11–16; referenced by Stephens, 199.

<sup>32</sup> Stephens, 200. The point is made in a reference by Bucer to the parable of the sower.

Whatever else it may be, preaching for Bucer is witness to salvation in Christ. It is “the testifying to Christ as Saviour (‘who will baptise [hearers] with fire and the Holy Spirit, that is, who will renew them to salvation by inspiring a new and divine mind’).”<sup>33</sup> Bucer’s understanding of the Spirit baptism metaphor is apparently largely soteriological, with a concomitant sanctifying dimension. This last seems to concord with the pietistic concerns of some of the radical reformers and anticipates in some measure the preaching of the early Methodists.

Bucer regards his own view of the inward speaking by the Spirit and the outward word of preaching as intermediate and balanced. He admits that the word of God *may* come to us through “a revelation or an oracle, in the written word of scripture or the spoken word” of preaching. The word *may* is important here: *usually* God teaches inwardly while the outward word is being communicated, but not always. He stresses the importance of distinguishing inward from outward word, and though they are not to be “opposed to each other,” they may each occur “without the other.” So-called “private” or personal revelations, or ‘intuitions of the mind,’ insists Bucer, must be “tested by the written word of scripture.”<sup>34</sup> His line of reasoning in both *Contra Bernhard Wacker* and the *Bericht über dem eusserlichen und innerlichen Wort* (*Report on the outward and inward word*) is that God through the Spirit (giving faith) is needful for the written and preached word and sacraments to be effectual. He proceeds to drive the point home when he remarks: ‘Whoever says that the outward word of God, without the inward, effects nothing in man to salvation, speaks Christianly and rightly, and no one should contradict it.’<sup>35</sup>

In the final decade-and-a-half of his life Bucer moved closer to the Lutheran view, which consistently presents the word and sacraments as the instituted channels, vehicles, and instruments of the Spirit and grace. In the *Gospels* (1536 edition), and in his very late works, such as *Ephesians* (1550) and *De Regno Christi* (written in England), Martin Bucer accents more positively the fact that Christ ‘effects salvation’ solely by his Spirit, *but ‘uses . . . the word, both the visible word [the sacraments] and the audible word in the gospel. By them he offers and presents remission of sins, communion in himself, and eternal life.’*<sup>36</sup>

<sup>33</sup> 81.A.25–B.12; 27.A.13–21; 64.D.18–65.A.2; referenced by Stephens, 200.

<sup>34</sup> KR 2.200.24–7; referenced by Stephens, 208.

<sup>35</sup> KR 2.200.21–4, 31–3; referenced by Stephens, 209. Bucer refers to Augustine’s argument that the word bears fruit in our consciousness, not because it has been communicated, but ‘because it has been believed.’

<sup>36</sup> 329.A.1; 188.D.21; 485.B.3–6; referenced by Stephens, 211.] My italics.

In summing up we can reiterate that Bucer consistently sees salvation as originating with God and brought about through the agency of the Holy Spirit. No human activity, in and of itself, be it the administration of the sacraments or the preaching of the word, can impart the Spirit. This being said, we must add that *the Spirit can and regularly does use the work of the minister*. The fruit-bearing work is that in which the Spirit has taught inwardly, i.e. in the heart and mind of the hearer—since only the Spirit opens the heart and mind. However, in exceptional cases, the Spirit can act, as Stephens phrases it, “freely apart from the word to teach the elect....” Usually, though, the Spirit comes to God’s chosen, and evokes faith in them, *as or after* the word is communicated.<sup>37</sup>

## 1.2. John Calvin’s Pneumatology of Preaching

Calvin, the Geneva reformer and seminal theologian who influenced (probably more than any other single individual) the beliefs and *praxis* of much of the English-speaking church in North America, was seen to hold, like Bucer before him, a median position regarding the word-and-Spirit question. In his study on Calvin’s theology of preaching, T.H.L. Parker sees Calvin’s position as a sort of median between what he refers to as the extremes of Luther on one side and the Zwinglians on the other. The writer states that the [radicals or] enthusiasts (who felt that the pioneering Reformers had not gone far enough in the reforming venture) “were very vehement in declaring that the Spirit, with all His grace, was given immediately to the soul, that is, given independently of the Word and Sacraments.” At the other antipode, Luther insisted that the Spirit “was given only through the Word and the Sacraments, which thus mediated grace to men.” Though not wanting to leave the Word completely out of account, the Zwinglians still were much closer in their stance to the enthusiasts than to Luther, in that they affirmed “immediacy.”<sup>38</sup>

In *his* doctrine of preaching, John Calvin attempted to “walk a middle path” (especially noticeable in *Institutio* iv. 1.6), trying to avoid, on the one hand, an over-emphasis on the “dignity of the ministry” (purporting that human preachers speak God’s very word), and, on the other, the overly-strong emphasis on the “criminality” of the notion that ‘mortal’ humans may effect “what properly belongs to the Holy Spirit.”<sup>39</sup> Calvin, as Parker shows, agrees with Zwingli on the point that preaching may be called the Word of

<sup>37</sup> Stephens, 212. My italics.

<sup>38</sup> T.H.L. Parker, *The Oracles of God: An Introduction to the Preaching of John Calvin* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1947), 45.

<sup>39</sup> Parker, *op. cit.*, 49–50.

God “derivatively or by association.” Yet he also goes in Luther’s direction by reasoning that, since preaching is “a handing on of the Gospel of Scripture” it is not, for that fact, a “second-hand” Word. Parker cites a relevant quote from the work of Canon Lilley, who writes: ‘Witness and that which was witnessed to must be one ever-present Divine act.’<sup>40</sup> Since the Bible is “the source, standard and criticism of preaching” the bond between preaching and the Scriptures is “indissoluble.”

Denying the validity of the revelation-plus-reason approach of Aquinas, Calvin emphasized not the ‘book of nature’ but that of Scripture: “What the Scriptures teach we must accept without argument or diminution; where the Scriptures are silent, we also must be humbly silent before the secret wisdom of God. The preacher, therefore, has nothing new to declare, for ‘The secrets of his will which he determined to reveal to us, he discovers in his word; and these are all that he foresaw would concern us or conduce to our advantage.’<sup>41</sup> Thus it is not the preacher’s job to attempt to introduce “new truths” but “to relate the revelation of God given once for all in Jesus Christ to the needs of his own generation.”<sup>42</sup> The gift and grace of preaching and/or teaching (Calvin hardly distinguishes between them) is not given to all; however, those who are called to preach must be able to teach (1 Tim. 3:2)—not just comprehending the Word for themselves, but able to make it understandable to others. Basically, therefore, preaching is the Word of God because it is “the exposition [and interpretation] of the Scriptures, through which alone God speaks to men.”<sup>43</sup> Preaching also constitutes the Word of God because preachers are called and commissioned as God’s ambassadors, with “authority to speak in His name.” They can be confident of this, because the Holy Spirit has given them this vocational “inner consciousness,” which is then further confirmed by the Church’s call. Hence, they are to do “nothing of their own ability”—“it is the Master who guides them.”<sup>44</sup>

Although the Geneva reformer would not say that the preacher who preaches the Scripture is thereby an unfailing divine Voice, he still maintains that the one preaching “may be assured that God will, as it pleases Him, give His Holy Spirit to the words spoken,

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<sup>40</sup> A.L. Lilley, *Religion and Revelation*, 85; cited by Parker, 50.

<sup>41</sup> *Inst.* III, 21, 1; quoted by Parker, 51.

<sup>42</sup> Parker, 51.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.* Note that Calvin here stresses the importance of the *preached* Word rather than the scriptural canon itself. Like Luther, Calvin saw some portions of the Bible as problematic. Cf. David Buttrick’s insightful discussion of Calvin’s (and contemporary Protestantism’s) view of Scripture in his *A Captive Voice: The Liberation of Preaching* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994), 24–32.

<sup>44</sup> C.R. xxvi, 66; quoted by Parker, 52.



to make them His Word. But [the preacher] can never take for granted the presence of the Spirit, who is given of God's free goodness and grace."<sup>45</sup> Leaning toward Luther's view, Calvin believed that "[t]he Holy Spirit is given in the Word, giving it the spiritual power which makes it the *organum* of God's grace, so that through it is given Jesus Christ and the work which He performed for men. The divine Word which is preached creates faith, forgives sin, and regenerates in the case of the unbeliever, and establishes, cleanses and confirms faith in the believer."<sup>46</sup> This, then, is one facet of the inward witness of the Spirit.

A second meaning in Calvin's system for the interior witness of the Spirit is that the Holy Spirit illumines the human mind (as Bucer wrote earlier) so that the Gospel may be understood. However, "it is through the Word that the Spirit witnesses to [the Word]." In trinitarian phrasing it can be said that "[t]he preaching of the Word of God is the ever renewed Revelation of God the Father given once for all in His Son Jesus Christ, mediated through the Holy Spirit." Parker quotes Lilley: 'The witness of the Spirit *to* Revelation is simply the fact that the Spirit speaks *in* Revelation.'<sup>47</sup>

This means that "the preaching of the Gospel" involves God's "seeking" us<sup>48</sup>—supernaturally but using natural language. Hence, preaching is akin to prophetic oracle, because it is divine communication coming to us *through* human speech. The inward witness of the Spirit, then, was not for Calvin "an immanence of the Spirit," or, as for Zwingli and his followers, "another and higher form of the Word of God, which the outward Word testified to and explained."<sup>49</sup>

### 1.2.1. Preaching as Authoritative Witness

With regard to the preacher's authority, Parker describes Calvin's view as follows: "All the dignity and authority [the preacher] possesses comes from his lowliness, since he is only a witness to a pre-eminent Lord, and merely a servant to God and His Church."<sup>50</sup> He later adds: "The doctrine...which is put forward in the name of God ought to be as authoritative as if all the Angels of Heaven descended to us, as if God Himself had revealed His majesty before our eyes."<sup>51</sup> For the Geneva reformer, the preaching of the scripture is a weighty and awesome phenomenon—for both the speaker and the hearers. Parker gives

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<sup>45</sup> Parker, 52.

<sup>46</sup> Parker, 55–56.

<sup>47</sup> Lilley, *op. cit.*, 86; quoted by Parker, 56.

<sup>48</sup> Parker, 56.

<sup>49</sup> Parker, 55.

<sup>50</sup> Parker, 58.

<sup>51</sup> Parker, 62.

Calvin's line of thought as follows: "But when we have the testimony that what is brought to us proceeds from God (as when the preacher shows us from Scripture that he is not inventing anything...) then whoever is restive is certainly not quarrelling with a creature, but is clearly resisting God, who wishes to be heard speaking thus by men and making use of them as His agents."<sup>52</sup> In this regard, Calvin (like Bucer) emphasizes the importance of the minister's character or *ēthos*: as Parker puts it, "[T]he preacher must show by his life that he also is obedient to the Word he preaches; his life must ratify his doctrine."<sup>53</sup>

### 1.2.2. The Spirit's Witness regarding the Preached Word

For Calvin, it is the Spirit who illumines the word in the heart and mind of the hearer. Parker writes: "The final and definitive criterion to distinguish between the true Word and false words is the witness of the Holy Spirit to the Gospel. Unless the Holy Spirit enlightens the mind and gives life to the preaching, it will remain the words of a man, and powerless to bring salvation." And later: "[The people] are quite unable to understand anything of the Gospel unless the Holy Spirit enlightens them." In the same vein, it is the Spirit who reveals 'Christ in the Gospel,' therefore people should pray for this revelation as they make their way to hear the Word preached.<sup>54</sup>

Preaching (for Calvin) is concerned with "the humanly unprovable." It declares God's existence and providence, the incarnation of God's Son, and the meaning of his crucifixion and resurrection—none of which can be proven by logical argument or by scientific demonstration. Rather, the truths of Christian preaching call for faith. Parker explains:

In the legal sphere it is analogous to the evidence of the witness rather than to the pleading of the barrister. If attempts to prove the truth of our faith are legitimate, they are even so still not the task of the preacher, but of the apologist. Just as the *keryx* [of ancient times] brings forward no argument to prove his proclamation, so the preacher must confine himself to the declaration of his news.<sup>55</sup>

Even if Calvin's own sermons might be judged "weak in form" or "low in style" in a secular rhetoric class—though his writing is consistently lucid—the Reformer would no doubt counter that he is dealing with truth that is "improbable to reason, and probable only to faith" and that his body of teaching (the Scripture) cannot be proved to be the word of

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<sup>52</sup> Parker, 63.

<sup>53</sup> Parker, 59. At one point Calvin declares, with a burst of passion, that it would be preferable 'to break [one's] neck' while ascending toward the pulpit, if one has not made it a priority 'to be the first to follow God.' C.R. XXVI, 304; quoted by Parker, 60.

<sup>54</sup> Parker, 64.

<sup>55</sup> Parker, 66.

God, and hence ‘will never find credence in the hearts of men, till it be confirmed by the internal testimony of the Spirit.’<sup>56</sup>

If salvific faith in the hearts of the hearers (including regeneration and transformation) be the objective in Christian preaching, then it becomes clear just how important the role of the Holy Spirit is in the preaching task all along the line: for as the third article of the ancient creed puts it, the Holy Spirit is the Giver of life. As we have noted above, Martin Bucer and John Calvin, both of them stalwart proponents of Reformation thought and serious writers on the theme of effective preaching, stress the importance—indeed, the necessity—of the testimony of the Spirit. It is through the enlightening work of the Spirit, after all, that the ancient documents of scripture come alive for both preacher and hearer; and it is the enlivening power of the Spirit that vivifies the preached Word in the hearer’s heart and mind. Without the illumination and quickening of the Spirit the Bible remains a book of lifeless words on dead pages; without these operations of the Spirit, preaching also misses its objective of becoming God’s life-bringing and life-transforming Word for all people.

Though both Bucer and Calvin emphasize the importance of study and education with regard to preaching, and though both make a point to mention the importance of exemplary character (what in rhetorical terminology is referred to as the speaker’s *ēthos*), it is clear that these Reformers give a large place to the role of the Holy Spirit in preaching. In fact, they seem to say that the working of the Spirit is a *sine qua non* if preaching is to have its divinely-intended effect.

What about Spirit-awareness and Spirit-dependence in the homiletical theory and preaching of our own day? Have we lost sight of this essential, or are there still voices bearing witness to the need for Spirit-directed witnesses in contemporary society? Happily, there are a few. And to a consideration of these voices we now turn.

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<sup>56</sup> *Inst.* I, 7, 4; quoted by Parker, 68.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE SPIRIT & PREACHING IN MODERN HOMILETICAL THEORY

#### 2.1. J. Ithel Jones' Pneumatology of Preaching

In order to serve as an effective witness in the world for Christ and the gospel, maintains J. Ithel Jones, the preacher needs to engage with both the Spirit and the word. Designating the Spirit as being the illuminator of both word and world, Jones adds: "It is God the Holy Spirit Who alone can show us the path which leads from the Word to the world."<sup>1</sup> He further emphasizes that there must be movement both ways (from world to Word and Word to world) in order that there be "real confrontation." For this engagement with the world-context it is the Spirit who provides both insight and intensity. Whereas more recent writers<sup>2</sup> see the reference to fire in John the Baptist's metaphor of Spirit baptism as purgative/restorative, Jones makes the popular connection between fire and fervour, or fire and fervency—although he is unwilling to use either of these terms. While not quite satisfied with the term 'intensity,' he opts to stay with it, and states: "[I]n our preaching we may look to the Holy Spirit to give us intensity as well as insight, fire in addition to light."<sup>3</sup> The word 'intensity' comes close to the *mot juste*, for Jones, since it conveys the day-of-Pentecost phenomena of power, fire and wind.<sup>4</sup>

Soon after, Jones becomes almost 'pentecostal' in his rationale, reiterating the need for intensity, and insisting that "the manifestation of power which came on the day of Pentecost must somehow be translated into our preaching today."<sup>5</sup> He quotes the Cappadocian, Gregory of Nyssa, who, "speaking of the Divine Word being accompanied by the Divine Breath, claims that 'the breath of God which goes forth with the Word must be held to be a living Power...'"<sup>6</sup> Fire and power, observes Jones, are "the figures [describing 'the difference which the Holy Spirit was to make in the apostles' and our witnessing...'] and they typify the enthusiasm and release which came with the descent of the Spirit."<sup>7</sup> In our concern to guard against overt appeals to hearers' emotions, says the author, we have over-

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<sup>1</sup> J. Ithel Jones, *The Holy Spirit and Christian Preaching* (London: The Epworth Press, 1967), 40–41.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Frank D. Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit: A Global Pentecostal Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), *passim*.

<sup>3</sup> Jones, 43.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Or. Catech.*, 2; cited by Jones, 46.

<sup>7</sup> Jones, 46.

corrected to the point where we take a “conversational approach in the pulpit” that is “calculated” and devoid of the Spirit’s fire. He calls for reflection on this point: “I think we need to look hard and long at this tendency to magnify the conversational style and approach when declaring the gospel....” He introduces a caveat as well, warning that preachers should not “identify self-conscious histrionics with the fire and power of the Holy Spirit.” He quotes Spurgeon’s reminder that ‘our flame must be kindled from on high. Nothing is more to be despised than a mere painted fire, the simulation of earnestness . . . let the fire be kindled by the Holy Ghost, not by animal passion...’”<sup>8</sup> Jones reasons that if preachers truly reflect upon the facts of the salvation event as they are presented in the gospel it will be incongruous to communicate them in “cold, calculated, conversational tones.” He adds: “Is it conceivable that this news should be declared except by a soul aglow, and with an excitement akin to ecstasy?” He broadly hints that preachers may often be guilty of ‘quenching the Spirit’ (1 Thess. 5:19), when he writes: “I wonder sometimes whether we do not stupidly put a stop to the release which the Holy Spirit can bring. For it is not enough that [preachers] have the light of the truth. [They] must have also the glow and power that will enable [them] to get the truth ‘across.’ This has ever been the mark of great preaching....”<sup>9</sup> His closing thought in the paragraph is that preachers visibly moved by the Spirit will be enabled to move their hearers to make a notable and positive difference in the world.<sup>10</sup> And with this the present writer fully concurs.

The Spirit, we learn, is given expressly to enable effective witness. Not only for the “apprehension of truth” has the Spirit been given, asserts Jones, “but quite specifically to enable its effective transmission by word of mouth.” Therefore, preachers who are troubled because of their weak and ineffective delivery can take heart from the fact that the Spirit can help them in this area. For the Holy Spirit, as Jones notes (with reference to Matt. 10:19–20), can help us to know *how* we are to speak as well as *what* we are to say.<sup>11</sup> There is an “unmistakable linking” of the Holy Spirit, observes Jones, “with the *how* of oral witness as well as the *what*.”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> C. Spurgeon, *An All-round Ministry* (n.pub., n.d.), 176f.; cited by Jones, 47.

<sup>9</sup> Jones, 47.

<sup>10</sup> Jones, 48. He includes mention of Henry Ward Beecher’s analogy of otherwise well-prepared but seemingly Spirit-less preachers as archers with the finest of arrows but who have no bow to “shoot” their message “strongly home.” Their manuscripts are typically beautiful, but their delivery is poor due to impotence. — H.W. Beecher, *Lectures on Preaching*, Series I, 186f.; referenced by Jones, 48.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 49.

Enlisting the support of Hendrikus Berkhof, Jones also discusses the Spirit as both the Source and ‘enhancer’ of preaching. In his commentary on the above-mentioned Matthaean passage, Berkhof states: ‘Spirit and speaking...belong together.’ He later adds: ‘[W]ith striking frequency we are told [in the Bible] that the main fruit of the Spirit is that he opens our mouths and encourages us to speak.’<sup>13</sup> When imbued with the Spirit, and directed by the Spirit, the preaching of otherwise ordinary individuals is perceptibly enhanced. This is noticeable in the earliest Christian proclamation. Jones describes the phenomenon: “[W]hatever else happens, natural powers are raised above their normal condition (one might be tempted to say exploited to the full); penetration of mind is strengthened and the truth comes glowingly alive.”<sup>14</sup> To conclude his chapter the author refers to a sermon<sup>15</sup> by Leo the Great, in which the latter states that it ‘belongs’ to the Holy Spirit ‘to set men on fire of love.’ Jones sums up: “The setting of men thus on fire makes for power in preaching. And in this sense the Holy Spirit ‘makes’ the proclamation.”<sup>16</sup>

When considering the ensemble of scripture, says Jones, it becomes clear that God’s Spirit plays a crucial role in enlivening the Word in the hearer’s heart. The author refers to the petitioner in the Psalms, who prays ‘Incline my heart unto Thy testimonies’ (119:36, KJV); and to the narrative in Acts, in which Luke expressly states that Lydia’s heart was ‘opened’ by the Lord when Paul preached the gospel at the riverside in Philippi (16:14).<sup>17</sup> The phenomenon of Christian preaching, then, is apparently a cooperative effort of human and divine agency, and it seems important to name the importance of both the divine Spirit and the imperfect human preacher-witness.

Among Reformation writers, states Jones, John Calvin<sup>18</sup> is notable for having emphasized the “self-authenticating character of the canonical Scriptures.” Yet he also, as the author notes, speaks of the Spirit as ‘the internal teacher, by whose agency the promise of salvation, which would otherwise only strike the air on our ears, penetrates into our minds.’ In the relevant footnote he quotes Calvin’s elaboration as follows: ‘For though it (the Word) win our reverence by its internal majesty, it never seriously affects us till it is sealed by the Spirit in our hearts.’<sup>19</sup> According to Calvin, preachers would be working in

<sup>13</sup> Berkhof, *The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*, 36; quoted by Jones, 49.

<sup>14</sup> Jones, 49.

<sup>15</sup> Sermon 77; referred to by Jones, 49.

<sup>16</sup> Jones, 49.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. chapter one (above).

<sup>19</sup> Calvin, *Inst.* iii. 1§4; i. 74; quoted by Jones, 53.

vain without the divine involvement of Christ and his Spirit. The Reformer declares: 'Teachers [and preachers] would cry aloud to no purpose did not Christ, the internal teacher, by means of His spirit, draw to Himself those who are given Him of the Father.' It is the Spirit, then, as the 'enlightening power' that "makes an entrance for the Word."<sup>20</sup>

Karl Barth, explains Jones, teaches that we can speak distinguishingly of the Word preached, the Word written, and the Word revealed. Jones elaborates:

While [Barth] claims that the Church's proclamation and, indeed, the Bible itself, are in a sense the result of human activity with all the limitations peculiar to our poor humanity, nevertheless both these can become the Word of God as and when God pleases. Moreover, this event of the Bible or Christian proclamation becoming the Word of God is a specific act of God.<sup>21</sup>

When the composite of Barth's statements on this subject are considered as such, it becomes clear that transformation of the hearer through the gospel is a miracle all along the line. He declares that the 'possibility of knowing the Word of God is God's miracle on and in us, just as much as are the Word itself and the utterance of it.'<sup>22</sup> For Barth, says Jones, "it is the Holy Spirit who brings revelation to fulfilment by making man open and ready for it so that he not only becomes capable of receiving it but actually does receive it."<sup>23</sup> Whether the preacher be holding forth eloquently or in a weak and stammering manner, the Spirit is, as the author points out, "engaged in a twofold activity. On the one hand, as He makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered when we pray...so also He sorts out our confused and faltering proclamation because we cannot preach as we ought; on the other hand he deals with men's hearts in a direct effective operation to enable them to hear the Word as it is in very truth the Word of God."<sup>24</sup>

Citing the work of J.E. Fison, Jones points out that there is sometimes a special manifestation of the Spirit's presence while preaching:

[T]here comes at times that sense of the preacher being so *en rapport* with his audience that between him and them there arises a new Spirit, Who can only be described as Holy. This is what makes the true sermon, in [P.T.] Forsyth's graphic phrase, the 'ordered hallelujah of the congregation' . . . No sermon preparation whether in study or in prayer, can by itself produce this, for, as every preacher knows, it is something that can never be conjured by any technique of eloquence or rhetoric or of devotional preparation, but is always 'given.'<sup>25</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Calvin, *Inst.* iii, 2§34; referenced by Jones, 53.

<sup>21</sup> Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I. 1. 98ff.; referenced by Jones, 54.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 282; quoted by Jones, 54–55.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 339ff. Cf. *Credo*, 130; referenced by Jones, 55.

<sup>24</sup> Jones, 55.

<sup>25</sup> Fison, *The Blessing of the Holy Spirit*, 139; quoted by Jones, 59.

The frequency of the Spirit's action during and through our preaching, as well as its effectiveness, claims Jones, depends on our 'openness' to the Spirit's working.<sup>26</sup> He goes on to say that appropriating the Spirit's power "does not depend upon a great accession of human genius." It is gained, rather, through "the breaking down of the barrier of self-sufficiency." In other words, it requires abandonment—letting God be God in the preaching venture. Jones names the resulting benefit: "The preacher then experiences a flowing through him [and we add 'or her'], with the attendant reception by the congregation, of new and remarkable currents of power."<sup>27</sup>

## **2.2. James A. Forbes' Pneumatology of Preaching**

James Forbes, pastor of New York's Riverside Church, mentions both a lack of Spirit-awareness and Spirit-sensitivity in the contemporary American church (as he saw the situation when starting out in the preaching ministry). He notes that some "ingredients for spiritual awareness were missing in the larger church," and that there was "theoretical familiarity without experiential concreteness." Moreover, there was an "absence of freedom in liturgical expression" (that often left him "cold and unfulfilled"); in addition, there was "little awareness of the biblical gifts of the Spirit—at least the ones talked about in [his] church." Finally, it seemed there was little reliance upon the power of the Holy Spirit for the work of the ministry. There was definitely a lack of "general acknowledgement of such dependency—if it was indeed a part of the faith understanding"<sup>28</sup> It is not surprising, therefore, that one of Forbes' aims is to offer a challenge to appropriate the Spirit's help and power for the enhancement of preaching. He comments: "I...hope to show how contemporary preaching can be enriched by a fresh appropriation of the power of the Holy Spirit. I strongly believe that an effective call to Holy Spirit empowerment is a most valuable homiletical offering."<sup>29</sup> With this statement we heartily agree.

### **2.2.1. The Spirit's Anointing: A Central Paradigm**

Forbes enunciates his approach as well as his hope: "The anointing of the Holy Spirit is the central paradigm for our discussion. It is a biblical category with rich exper-

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<sup>26</sup> He quotes F.B. Meyer: '[H]ow sadly [the Spirit's] witness has been weakened and hindered by the medium through which it has come. He has not been able to do many mighty works because of the unbelief which has kept closed and barred those avenues through which he would have poured his glad testimony to the unseen and glorified Lord.' – F.B. Meyer, in the introduction to A.J. Gordon, *The Ministry of the Spirit* (n.pub., n.d.), 13; quoted by Jones, 71.

<sup>27</sup> Jones, 73.

<sup>28</sup> James A. Forbes, Jr., *The Holy Spirit and Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), 13.

<sup>29</sup> Forbes, 14.



iential meaning. The hope is that as the whole church discovers provisions for empowerment and guidance, we will enter into a new season of revitalization and renewal.”<sup>30</sup> Most important is the following insight:

The purpose of this effort is to make the case that the spiritual renewal needed today must involve...interdenominational cooperation. We must recognize that forces at work in our culture to limit the spiritual dynamic of church life require concerted opposition from all church traditions. The fragmentation...in the body of Christ is part of the malaise to be overcome. This is especially the case in the conflicting views of how the Holy Spirit is to be experienced in the church today.<sup>31</sup>

He continues: “Until we come together humbly to try to understand the causes of our divisions and the diminished faithfulness of our witness, our renewal will be delayed. On the other hand, we can expect to see the manifestation of the gifts of the Spirit in new ways if we jointly seek God’s remediating grace.”<sup>32</sup>

It is through his personal experience as a preacher and the son of preachers that Forbes comes to the conviction that “*the anointing [of the Spirit] makes the difference!*”<sup>33</sup> He makes much of the preparation of Jesus for his public ministry: he discusses at length the significance of the Lord’s baptism by John in the Jordan, specifically mentioning the identification of baptism with the anointing of the Spirit, the descent of the Spirit in the form of a dove, and the divine word of acceptance.<sup>34</sup> He also mentions a text in Acts in which there is a linking—even identification—of baptism and the Spirit’s anointing:

You know the *word* which he sent to Israel, *preaching* good news of peace by Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all), the *word* which was *proclaimed* throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism which John *preached*: how God *anointed* Jesus of Nazareth with the *Holy Spirit* and with *power*, how he went about *doing good* and *healing* all that were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. (Acts 10:36–38, RSV; emphasis added).

The above text has been highlighted to show the importance of proclamation or preaching. It might be reasonably argued that the phrase ‘went about doing good’ could also refer to teaching and preaching the word, since, of the recorded acts of social charity carried out by Jesus, only the turning of the water into wine, and the multiplying of the bread and fish come quickly to mind. Even Christ’s remarkable ministry of healing and deliverance—which certainly qualifies as ‘doing good’—was often, in a sense, a ‘ministry’ of the spoken word.

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<sup>30</sup> Forbes, 16.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Forbes, 16. Italics in text.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 34–35.

The anointing Jesus experienced, says Forbes, “can be viewed as a model of spiritual formation.” Once ‘experientially appropriated’ the anointing will accomplish important ends, he claims: it will make us aware of the Spirit and of the empowerment needed for ‘more effective preaching.’<sup>35</sup> Under the abiding influence of the anointing we can expect to see a difference in how we preach; and as Forbes puts it, “the objectives of the gospel will be manifested more abundantly.”<sup>36</sup> Forbes focuses on a key verse from Luke’s gospel concerning the preaching ministry of Christ. The Riverside pastor stresses the fact that Jesus’ use of Isaiah 61 as a “basis of his ministry... should be instructive for us.”<sup>37</sup> He states: “Jesus came to Nazareth. He unrolled the Scriptures and found the place where it was written, ‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor’ (Luke 4:18). He then gave the scroll to the attendant, took his seat, and said, ‘Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing’ (verse 21). Forbes gives a biblical definition of the term *anointing*. The related verb ‘to anoint’, he comments, means

to pour, rub, or to spread, as an ointment, an oil, or a fragrance. ...[T]he basic idea is that when this special ointment is used, something significant happened. In most cases the basic intent symbolizes and concretizes divine authorization, within religious ritual. It gives evidence of the impartation of wisdom and knowledge, and the communication of the grace and power of God. Such persons who were so anointed, by virtue of their anointing, were expected to serve as representatives of God in whose name and power they were so anointed.<sup>38</sup>

In the course of time, explains Forbes, the concept of the anointing came to be linked with “the restoration of power and might, by which the servant of the Lord would usher in the age to come.” In Joel 2, says our preacher, the anointing will be given more effusively: we are told “. . . all flesh shall be the recipient of the pouring, the anointing of the Spirit.”<sup>39</sup> Forbes also proposes that the apostolic church “retained” what Jesus meant by the anointing; to validate this point, he quotes from Peter’s first sermon before a non-Jewish audience, a quote which emphasizes divine anointing as the basis for Christ’s preaching and healing ministry (Acts 10:36–38). The definitive word about his identity and mission came, not from his boyhood home, or from the temple, but from heaven. Having experienced “divine acceptance, approval and appointment” (as Forbes states), “[t]here was no need for him to consult with the rabbis or even with Mary about his readiness for

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<sup>35</sup> Forbes, 26–27.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 29.

ministry. He had heard the word of confirmation from heaven. The work he was called to do would expose him to serious assaults against his sense of mission. He had to be fortified from the beginning with authority of the highest order. Without this word, his anointing would have been incomplete.”<sup>40</sup> If baptism was the Spirit’s leading in Christ’s life, so was the wilderness test. The devil was doubtless more than happy to tempt the Lord, but it was the Spirit’s idea that he undergo the testing. Indeed, as the pastor remarks, the wilderness stand-off is “a very important aspect of the anointing.” He notes too that Matthew’s account of the temptation concludes with angels ministering to the Lord, which actions constitute “encouragement and congratulations for having endured the assault.” This, he says, is “one of the more comforting dimensions of the anointing.”<sup>41</sup>

Why so much emphasis on the Spirit’s anointing? The preacher answers thus: “The power to be obedient to God’s will in the face of human opposition is foundational for prophetic ministry.”<sup>42</sup> This, then, shows why the anointing is necessary. In summing up, Forbes offers a definition:

[T]he anointing of the Holy Spirit is that process by which one comes to a fundamental awareness of God’s appointment, empowerment, and guidance for the vocation to which we are called *as the body of Christ*. It is that process that leads us to yield fully to the revealed will of God. Out of a sense of divine power working within us, we are made ready to go forth to be about the task of ministry.”<sup>43</sup>

Forbes points out that among the dimensions of the anointing Jesus “demonstrated strength to bear witness in his community of faith” and “experienced power from beyond the self, from on high”<sup>44</sup>—and we can add that it is this power which Jesus emphasizes and enjoins for his followers (Acts 1:4, 5, 8). We can deduce from Scripture, and also from the analysis offered by Forbes, that Jesus meant to establish an anointed community; he writes: “It is only as *the members of the community* stand in the power of the anointing that they will be able to fulfill their commission. Even as Jesus served in the light of his anointing, *so will disciples bear faithful and true witness as the same Spirit indwells believers in community*.”<sup>45</sup>

By proclaiming ‘Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing,’ Jesus was linking his hometown sermon to the prophetic tradition. Forbes quotes Brilioth:

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<sup>40</sup> Forbes, 35.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. Emphasis added.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 39. Emphasis added.

The [Nazareth] sermon was prophetic in the deepest sense, inasmuch as it is the essential nature of prophecy to speak to the present with divine authority and to transform the historical revelation into a contemporaneous, dynamic reality.... *Jesus' words have thus given the highest authorization to the claim of the Christian preacher that he or she stands in the prophetic succession.*<sup>46</sup>

Forbes then observes: "This is why preachers of the gospel cannot be content with just making comments on a text or presenting interesting stories with a religious point of view. A broader concept of preaching is required—one that expects that the God of creation will be present to transform spoken words into deeds of liberation and massive reorientation of life for the sake of the kingdom."<sup>47</sup> The anointing of the Spirit, claims Forbes, was the source of Jesus' preaching power. And his life backed up his words. As he notes, "[Jesus] preached not only with words, but his life was the 'amen' to the proclamation of his lips."<sup>48</sup>

Despite the few scattered references to the concept of the anointing in the New Testament (2 Cor. 1:21, 22; and 1 John 2:20, 27), the anointing theme (explains the Riverside preacher) can *more freely* be applied to preachers living in the post-apostolic period than to Jesus and his disciples. For making a claim of being 'anointed' in first-century Palestine, implies Forbes, would have sparked suspicion among the authorities, both Jewish and Roman. Thus, as he adds: "...[R]eferences to the divine empowerment, authorization, and investment, with divine grace for mission must generally be sought under other headings."<sup>49</sup> And those "other headings" include such terms as 'baptism of / with / in / by the Holy Spirit,' 'filled with the Holy Spirit,' 'endued with power,' and 'Holy Spirit poured out upon us'—all of which "speak of the process by which believers are divinely empowered for the work of the kingdom."<sup>50</sup>

Forbes finds it reasonable that there should be an equation involving *Christ* (the Anointed One), *Christians* (those bearing Christ's name and who have the Spirit-anointing), *and the communities formed by these believers*. He mentions Antioch—where, according to Acts 11:26, the disciples were first called 'Christians'—as being "an excellent model of the Christian community." He remarks:

It was a church in which the Holy Spirit was a noticeable figure in the unfolding of that community's life. The leaders were 'full of the Spirit'; the fellowship was a special training ground for spirit-filled ministry. They sought the mind of the Spirit, they laid hands upon

<sup>46</sup> Yngve T. Brilioth, *A Brief History of Preaching*. Trans. by Karl E. Mattson. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965), 10; quoted by Forbes, 42. Emphasis added.

<sup>47</sup> Forbes, 43.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

those being sent forth for specific ministries, and they excelled in offering encouragement and sharing resources with those who were in need. It is not surprising that disciples were first called Christians there. It was not necessarily a term of derision as some have suggested. It was quite possibly due to the activity of the Spirit in their midst, which bore remarkable resemblance to Jesus whom they called the Anointed One. In like manner, the lifestyle of that small community showed that they, too, had been anointed by the Holy Spirit. Thus they were not called Jesusians, but Christians—like the Anointed One, they were ‘anointed ones.’<sup>51</sup>

In his work Forbes thus “offers” the anointing of the Holy Spirit “as an exhortation to recover the essential meaning of being a Christian” and “urges those who would serve the kingdom... to *reconsider the pattern* of our Lord’s preparation for public ministry.”<sup>52</sup> It is Forbes’ express hope to “heighten” his hearers’ and readers’ “awareness of the power and presence of the Holy Spirit as the source of our strength for service.”<sup>53</sup>

Particularly important for our proposal of preaching as Spirit-directed witness are a series of remarks made by the Riverside pastor when he discusses various characteristics or “marks” of the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Among these marks are a “willingness to witness” and “sensitivity to God’s guidance.” Forbes explains: “The anointed person is *willing to witness* in word and deed to the lordship of Jesus and the kingdom of God. It becomes our vocation to point to God’s saving power in the event of the Christ.”<sup>54</sup> The author stresses that the anointing is not made available “primarily for our personal edification.” Rather, it makes it possible for us, human though we are, to be “the embodiment of divine intent.” Forbes comments:

We are anointed to become agents of God who authorizes the process. The anointing is not a ritualistic ceremony to bestow honour; it is an induction into a life-sized role and responsibility. God’s plan of redemption requires servants on the earth. In the process of the anointing, selected servants are set forth to function in faith toward the consummation of the great design. Equipped with the anointing, we are prepared to work effectively for God.<sup>55</sup>

The anointing, implies Forbes, also opens us up to the guidance of God’ Spirit. He writes:

The magnitude of the operation and the multiplicity of components that must work together demand divine supervision. Much of what is to be done clearly points in the direction of the coming kingdom. But at times, it will not be obvious how particular assignments fit into the larger plan. *This is a special problem in ministry.* If we spend too much time wondering whether our work is meaningful, the emotional drain becomes intense. Many drop out because they fail to rely on the guidance system or because there is no sense that they can

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<sup>51</sup> Forbes, 45.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 46. Emphasis added.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 48. Italics in text.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

check in for orders. When we lose a sense of appointment, the inclination is to abandon our post when the assignment seems to be unprofitable and unrewarding. Jesus sustained an awareness of being led by the Spirit by making consistent effort to maintain and renew communication with his Father. This is evident by the long hours he spent in the mountains alone before God. Even gestures such as a sigh, a look toward heaven, point to Jesus' sense of guidance.<sup>56</sup>

The pastor further compares what Paul terms 'walking in the Spirit' with the so-called 'dead reckoning' which pilots sometimes have to rely on. In summing up he reiterates: "The anointing of the Holy Spirit puts into operation a guidance system by which our work for the kingdom is focused and directed."<sup>57</sup> The term used is less important than the experience: "Sense perception, intuition, rationalization, and feelings are all called into action." Forbes gives biblical examples: Abraham's leaving his home in Ur, Paul's receiving the 'Macedonian call,' Jesus' struggles in the temptation narrative or in the Garden of Gethsemane. All these, explains the Riverside preacher, "fit in that broad guidance arrangement to which the anointing links us. The outcome is the freedom and courage to act in the confidence that God will bless our efforts."<sup>58</sup> In some instances, says Forbes, we may be quietly confident and in others, particularly in crisis situations, we may be sweating in desperation—but, in any event, as he puts it, "...we are enrolled in a continuing education laboratory in pneumatological epistemology—a spirit-directed way of knowing."<sup>59</sup>

The anointing of the Spirit also, as our preacher-homiletician phrases it, "results in *power from on high*." Because of the anointing we "will experience a plus factor" as we work for the kingdom. "This edge is necessary," states Forbes, "to do the work of God effectively. Jesus said to his disciples, 'Without me you can do nothing.' The author sees the reason here that "many burn out so soon:" [t]hey have sought to do a spiritual task without the aid of the Spirit."<sup>60</sup> Human effort and resources have their place, says Forbes, and they are "actually enriched by the anointing." However, the anointed person is conscious of a divine power-source at work within—"another dimension of empowerment." In other terms, the 'plus factor' has more than a human aspect. It is, after all, power from on high—from God's realm.<sup>61</sup> The remarkable ministry of healing and deliverance accomplished by Jesus, says the author, point to the "plus factor" of the Spirit's anointing.

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<sup>56</sup> Forbes, 48–49.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

Therefore it can be “identified” with imparted “capacities to serve the kingdom” or “evidence that what we do seems touched or coordinated by a kingdom facilitating agency.”<sup>62</sup> Having experienced the anointing of the Holy Spirit enables us, as our preacher puts it, to “go forth in ministry fully convinced that [our] efforts will make a [positive] difference.” Accordingly, ‘anointed ones’ “remain alert and expectant of emerging signs of the kingdom. Just as Jesus gave a summary of kingdom occurrences as authenticating evidence of his vocation, so Christians in whom the Spirit works are to expect signs following.”<sup>63</sup> Hence, the anointing is said to inspire such key aspects of faith as confidence and expectation.

In his experience as a homiletics instructor, Forbes would ask his entry-level students to come up with a “comprehensive definition” of preaching. However, if the element that he considers crucial had been left out, he would bring an amended definition to a subsequent class. It would read as follows: *‘Preaching is bearing witness to the resurrecting power of God, which extends itself into the regions of death, so that the new life in Christ breaks forth in all dimensions of the created order.’* He remarks: “Now that is a strong enough definition to contain what anointed preachers want to be about. This definition means that we are able to have a concept of preaching that demands that the anointing take place.”<sup>64</sup> With this “comprehensive approach” it is the Riverside preacher’s aim to impress the students at the outset of their program of study with the necessity of “a full anointing.” What is needed is not simply a unique, one-time memorable experience of receiving the Spirit’s power, but (as he points out) “a continuing jubilee of reinvestiture, reaffirmation, and covenanting is needed to accomplish Spirit-filled preaching on a continuing basis.”<sup>65</sup>

Anointed preaching, implies Forbes, is what is needed. It is needed to break traditional moulds. The needy modern culture, he says, “cries out for more than mere discourse on religious subjects.” Preachers need to demonstrate more than up-to-date knowledge of classic or contemporary literature, says Forbes; and they need “more than a masterful rhetorical style or even a bombastic Pentecostal preaching style.”<sup>66</sup> Preaching under the anointing (Forbes later points out) means admitting that we don’t know what to say unless

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<sup>62</sup> Forbes, 50–51.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 56. Emphasis added.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 57.

the Lord communicates the message to us first. We may be able to exegete a passage or make some comments about it, but without the anointing of the Spirit, the message will lack vitality. We are challenged to prophesy hope and life—even in the face of evident hopelessness and death.<sup>67</sup> Just as the Spirit enhanced Ezekiel’s awareness of the condition of the people of his time, so (says Forbes) the contemporary anointed preacher will be attuned to (and discern) what people are saying nowadays—not only with their words “but with the conditions of their lives.”<sup>68</sup> The pastor-homiletician asserts: “Part of the sermon preparation process is that you have to know what the Lord is saying to YOU about what the people are saying. Then you can hear what God has to say, and that is always a word of hope as well as judgment. The power of the anointed preacher is to be able to hear the word of God, and to know that that word is the word that brings life in the midst of death.”<sup>69</sup>

### 2.2.2. The Spirit as Helper in Prayer and Sermon Preparation

Even before being attuned to what the Spirit may wish to speak *through* us, it is important, says Forbes, to be attuned to what the Spirit may wish to speak *to* us, or *for* us. The Spirit as Paraclete and Helper can aid us by witnessing on our behalf. The recognition of our weakness is a natural context for prayer. A most common form of prayer is that of petition—asking God’s help. Forbes mentions Paul’s approach to prayer; he writes:

When the complications of internal conflict robbed him of the right words to pray, the Spirit came to his aid, bypassing his impasses and blending his sighs and groans with the persisting will of God. This freed him to be where he was, with all his doubts and fears, and at the same time kept him open to the invitation to follow the promise to the end.”<sup>70</sup>

Forbes relates something of his own experience in this regard:

I have felt the power of the Holy Spirit as a helper in my own prayer life. I remember once when I couldn’t find the words to appropriately address the God of my life. I knelt at my bed, stretched forth my arms and moved my shoulders in writhing jerks of anguish. All I could utter were sighs and groans. But afterwards, I felt so much better that I said, ‘Perhaps I can pray now.’ But it seemed the Spirit said to me, ‘You don’t need to pray any more now. Heaven is equipped to receive choreographed prayer. Also, your sighs and groans have already been decoded and help is on the way.’<sup>71</sup>

The Holy Spirit, through the anointing, can help us in “very definite ways,” says Forbes. Whether the need be “greater ease in getting to the central idea of the sermon,” or

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<sup>67</sup> Forbes, 62. The author makes this comment after quoting and discussing at some length the account of the valley of dry bones in Ezekiel, chapter 37—which is a perennial favourite among Pentecostals.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 64–65. Capitalization in text.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.



help in finding illustrations, or “greater freedom of expression,” or “more depth of analysis” or “a better sense of timing” or even “better structure,” the Spirit’s anointing can help us.<sup>72</sup> He goes on to say:

[T]here is a kind of continuous flow in the process of the Spirit’s unfolding of our mission, and of our gifts, and the focus of our responsibilities. The Spirit carries us so forcefully that the traditional distinctions of preparation of the preacher, preparation of the sermon, preparation for delivery, and the delivery of the sermon itself become subsidiary. What is left is a continuous ebb and flow of movement within the power of the Spirit. *First with one dimension of the preparation and then another, always moving as the Spirit directs.*<sup>73</sup>

Forbes compares the role of the Spirit to that of a “director of continuing education for our spirits.” He explains: “We are not beginners. This is not kindergarten. We are already on the way. But the Spirit that brought us this far continues to direct our paths. So preparing a sermon is not done by ourselves. The director, who has been with us all the way, is standing right there with us. We are not in the ministers’ workshop alone. The Spirit is there with us.”<sup>74</sup> Because of the “collaboration” of the Holy Spirit, says Forbes, “[m]uch of the anxiety and dread associated with the preparation process is removed....”<sup>75</sup> The Riverside pastor compares the Spirit not only to a director of education but also to a tour guide. He exclaims: “[W]hat a joy it is to work with this director of continuing education who is able to take on different roles and supply our every need. The Spirit [also] becomes a tour guide, through time and space, through truth and grace, leading us, so we can see, understand, and proclaim what is happening.” Forbes goes on to say: “This leading is a kind of exegetical process that pulls together our preparation. This tour guide is the master of terrain of all time and experience and eternity. It is out of this data that the sermonic event will flow.” He points out that the Spirit will enable discernment for *what the congregants are going through*, and suggest biblical texts *so that the preacher can effectively minister to the current needs*.<sup>76</sup> This “collaborative process,” says Forbes, can make sermon preparation “exciting”—something to “enjoy.” There is even ‘heat’ and ‘intensity’, says the pastor, “when the anointing brings the collaborator into the process of ‘getting the sermon out.’ And finally, at the time of delivery, there is a sense—given by the Spirit—that ‘this is the word that ought to be said.’”<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Forbes, 76.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 77. Emphasis added.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 79–80.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid. Emphasis added.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 81–82.

Finally, Forbes talks about the need for preachers to “enter a contract”—with the Holy Spirit and with the preaching vocation itself. This has a bearing on what we will say and how we will say it. We need, as he puts it, “to say ‘yes’ to the Spirit—and mean it.”<sup>78</sup> We also need to be able to say an unequivocal ‘yes’ to the preaching task. He elaborates:

Too often we struggle because we haven’t gotten to this point. It is difficult to be about a ministry of preaching while still being *reluctant* to do it. Let me be clear on one point. We don’t have to *want* to preach. But we should be willing, for there is little rest for the anointed preacher who resists the mandate. As Paul said, ‘Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!’<sup>79</sup>

Next, we learn from the Riverside pastor that it is important to “contract with ourselves.” This we do by reminding ourselves that we have agreed to follow the ways of the Spirit, which, as he points out, “aren’t always predictable.” Thus we need to pause and reflect even before the event, and ask ourselves again, ‘Am I “fully available” to the power of the Spirit?’ ‘Am I willing to speak loudly or softly? Am I ready to use the gestures and facial expressions that the Spirit may prompt?’ Important here is the conscious willingness to move in sync with the Spirit.<sup>80</sup> This is basic and requisite in order to embark on the adventure of preaching as Spirit-directed witness.

When considering how availability and openness to the Spirit looks in a church setting, Forbes (like Jones<sup>81</sup>) mentions the church at Antioch as a model—for the following reasons: the members there believed in the Spirit (and possessed a Christ-oriented Spirit). Their lifestyle and worship showed the reality of the Spirit, and they recognized the gifts of the Spirit. They had a teaching ministry and encouraged one another. In addition, they laid hands on the sick to minister healing—and love and generosity flourished there. Finally, they were open to the voice of God coming through both recognized leaders and ‘ordinary’ believers: prophecy was accepted; and there was substantial freedom of speech (utterance gifts, etc.) Forbes sums up: “Antioch represents the kind of congregation we need. Even seminaries should be like Antioch in their acknowledgment of the Spirit as present and active.” The Riverside pastor and former professor-of-preaching insists, then, that “the groundwork preparation” of such an anointed preaching ministry must be “a joint effort of congregation and seminary.”<sup>82</sup> Such acknowledgment of the Spirit will ensure their vitality.

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<sup>78</sup> Forbes, 83.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 83–84. Emphasis added. Paul’s “woe” is expressed in 1 Corinthians 9:16c.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 84.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. pages 19–20 (above).

<sup>82</sup> Forbes, 100–101.

## CHAPTER THREE

### PREACHING AS WITNESS IN MODERN HOMILETICAL THEORY

#### Introduction

The preceding chapters have focussed on the importance of acknowledging the role of the Holy Spirit in the preaching ministry. We have seen how important this matter is in the writings of the Reformers Bucer and Calvin—and for J. Ithel Jones and James A. Forbes, Jr., two homiletical thinkers writing in the latter part of the twentieth century. We have seen how Jones builds some of his argument for recognizing the role of the Spirit on what Calvin wrote almost four centuries earlier. We have noted that Forbes reaches back to the Gospel account, and particularly to the preaching ministry of Jesus, to ground and develop his theme of the crucial importance of the Spirit's anointing in relation to the preaching task.

So far we have emphasized that preachers need the Spirit's help in order to be effective in their calling. However, when considering the nature of preaching itself, or the self-identity of preachers, what else can be said? How is preaching best viewed or defined? What actually constitutes effective preaching? And what *are* Christian preachers? Are they functionaries of the state? Are they primarily servants of the institutional church? The present chapter explores the idea that preachers have much to gain by recognizing that they are primarily *witnesses*, and that their preaching too constitutes *witness*.

#### 3.1. Preaching as Witness: Foundational Observations

Homiletician Anna Carter Florence (in her fine dissertation focussing on preaching as testimony or witness) includes a discussion of Paul Ricoeur's work<sup>1</sup> concerning testimony, which (among other things) both analyses some basic implications from its juridical context and semantics and also offers some insights concerning its biblical dimensions. She mentions some of his foundational observations: 1) Testimony is the report or narration of what one has seen or understood—hence it implies speech; 2) Testimony is at the service of judgment—the witness “seeks to justify the account; the one who hears forms an opinion about the testimony;” 3) Testimony is by nature always for or against, and “can never claim

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Ricoeur, “The Hermeneutics of Testimony,” 123–130; summarized by Anna Carter Florence, in *Preaching as Testimony: Towards a Women's Preaching Tradition and New Homiletical Models* (Ph. D. Diss., 2000) (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Dissertation Services, 2003), 104–05.

certainty—only probability;” 4) Testimony “has the character of being able to be invalidated; 5) Testimony, being *rhetorical* discourse, is “a kind of proof and ... persuasion.” From this it follows that “the quality of the witness” is a significant “concern” (since this “can create problems for interpretation”). A “false testimony is a lie in the heart of the witness” and true witnesses are those who ‘seal’ their ‘bond to the cause that [they defend] by a public profession of ... conviction, by the zeal of a propagator, by a personal devotion which can extend even to the sacrifice of [their lives].”

Florence next mentions the connection that Ricoeur makes between bearing witness (the Greek word is *martyr*) and risk: that this risk may even involve the loss of one’s life. She sums up: “Testimony, then, must include the activity of a life, the acts and works that provide living proof of one’s conviction and devotion. The difference between a true and false witness is in this interiority, which we can call the *engagement* of the witness—“the engagement of a pure heart and an engagement to the death.”<sup>2</sup>

In discussing the *biblical* dimensions of testimony, and more especially its *prophetic* particularities, Paul Ricoeur (as Florence observes) lists four irruptions of its semantic meaning:

- 1) The witness is *one who is sent* to bear witness to a testimony which comes from somewhere else;
- 2) The witness testifies ... to the *radical, global meaning* of human experience, or, in short, to God;
- 3) The testimony is *proclamation for all people* by a single witness;
- 4) The testimony calls for a *total engagement of words and acts*, even at the cost of the life of the witness.<sup>3</sup>

Florence adds three important points: first, it is God who initiates the [prophetic] testimony, both with regard to its origin and its content; secondly, it is by testifying or bearing witness that one becomes a witness, not the other way round; and finally “*testimony fuses the confession of faith with the narrative of things seen.*” This last means, as Ricoeur expresses it, that there is ‘no witness of the absolute who is not [also] a witness of historic signs.’<sup>4</sup>

What does this mean for us in the Christian community? For our present argument this means that as members of Christ’s church, and representatives of God’s truth in the world, we bear witness to those eternal realities (especially faith, hope and love) in this present time-measured, historical world. We are, like our Lord, *witnesses to the truth* (John 19:37). When questioned by Pilate concerning his identity, Jesus chooses to forego the

<sup>2</sup> Ricoeur, “The Hermeneutics of Testimony,” 130; quoted by Florence, 105. Italics are in the text.

<sup>3</sup> Listed by Florence, 106. Italics are in the text.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. Summarized by Florence. Italics are in the text.

metaphors he used earlier in the gospel account ('I am the light...', 'I am the bread...', 'I am the good shepherd...')—here he states plainly that he is a king and that he has come into the present world to bear witness to the truth. Here we have a clear statement of how Jesus viewed himself in relation to the world. And here Christian preachers can find a way to describe themselves. The question of identity remains an important one. It was important in the first century: John the Baptist was asked who he was—and so was Jesus. In fact, Jesus prompted his disciples to answer this question concerning his identity (Matt. 16:15). For preachers today this question is no less important. Still more important, to be sure, is coming to terms with the *answer* that Christian preachers are basically witnesses—and that the work of preaching constitutes truth-witness.

In the NT, as Florence observes, "prophetic testimony... evolves into evangelical testimony." In Luke, "eyewitness testimony" emphasizes the historicity of key events, and accepts as equally valid also what has been seen in dreams and/or visions. Furthermore, "there is [in Luke] a 'profound unity between testimony about facts and events, and testimony about meaning and truth,' which indicates that faith is less about eyewitness accounts than about *preaching*."<sup>5</sup> We see a shift [adds Florence] from things *seen* to things *heard*." Florence sums up the section by explaining that in Ricoeur's understanding testimony in the NT "function[s] on two levels: it is both internal testimony, the seal of conviction, and it is the testimony of works patterned after Christ's passion and suffering."<sup>6</sup> By this we should understand, not the moral example of Christ, but the engagement of Christ himself as a Spirit-directed witness in the service of divine truth—one who takes the calculated risk and willingly suffers for the sake of the truth in a world at odds with God's truth. This puts Jesus directly in the company of the prophets of the Jewish tradition. What is more, it puts Christian preachers there too. They are in the *prophetic* succession as well as in the *apostolic* succession. They are in the line that extends back through Peter, James and John (and Philip's daughters, and Priscilla, and Paul) to Deborah, Huldah (2 Kings 22:14), Abraham, Noah, and Enoch (to name just a few)!

What does this mean for preaching as Spirit-directed witness? Florence, drawing conclusions from Ricoeur's observations (and finally naming the Spirit!) writes:

Christian testimony, like any other, must make its way in this world by arguing its case as best it can. Yet these are the terms which give testimony its power; this is the field which gives homiletics its greatest challenge and calling. In consenting to live by the rules of a

<sup>5</sup> Ricoeur, 136; referenced by Florence, 106–07.

<sup>6</sup> Florence, 107–08.

hermeneutics of testimony, we throw certainty to the wind and trust to the Spirit. *We trust* that God will initiate encounters with human beings. *We trust* that we will have the courage and sensitivity and restlessness to interpret these encounters. *We trust* that we will find the words to testify to what we have seen and believed about it. And *we trust* that the community of faith and, ultimately, God will judge our witness as well as our own engagement with it.”<sup>7</sup>

How then does this play out in the preaching ministry? Suppose we put ourselves into the place of Peter or Paul as we read about them in Acts. We believe we have encountered God. Our interpretation of such encounter(s) moves us to speak. We believe we have been sent to testify, to bear witness—whether we like it or not—and we also believe (in keeping with the gospel) that we pattern our lives after the example of Jesus (1 John 4:17b). We hope for favourable reception, and believe that some will accept our testimony, and yet we know too (like the prophets of the past) that some will condemn and malign us. Serving as a prophetic witness in the service of the truth typically involves risk.

### 3.2. Prophetic Witnessing from the Margins: A Historical Example

In an early section of her dissertation Florence tells the remarkable story of Jarena Lee (1773–1857), the first woman ever to receive a preaching license by the African Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States.<sup>8</sup> As a young woman (with no religious background to speak of) she moved to the city of Philadelphia, where she found a supportive ‘family’ in the A.M.E. Church pastored by Richard Allen. A few weeks later, just before the Sunday sermon, Jarena experienced “an ecstatic conversion.” Florence quotes the autobiographical account:

That moment, though hundreds were present, I did leap to my feet and declare that God, for Christ’s sake, had pardoned the sins of my soul... For a few moments I had *power to exhort* sinners, and to tell of the wonders and of the goodness of Him who had clothed me with His salvation. [This sounds remarkably like the Pentecost event.] During this time the minister was silent, until my soul felt its duty had been performed, when he declared another *witness* of the power of Christ to forgive sins on earth, was manifest in my conversion.<sup>9</sup>

In Lee’s subsequent call to preach there is also evidence of the Spirit’s divine witness mandating her to become a fulltime gospel-preaching-witness. As Jarena tells about her call (which she at first resisted), she recounts the memorable turning-point experience thus:

<sup>7</sup> Florence, 110–11. Emphasis added.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>9</sup> Lee, *Life and Religious Experience*, 29; quoted by Florence, 76. Emphasis added.

Between four and five years after my sanctification,<sup>10</sup> on a certain time, an impressive silence fell upon me, and I stood as if some one was about to speak to me, yet I had no such thought in my heart.—But to my utter surprise there seemed to sound a voice which I thought I distinctly heard, and most certainly understand, which said to me, ‘Go preach the Gospel!’ I immediately replied aloud, ‘No one will believe me.’ Again I listened, and again the same voice seemed to say—‘Preach the Gospel; I will put words in your mouth....’<sup>11</sup>

After a long period of hesitation, and painful discouragement (nearly eight years), Lee received the endorsement of Richard Allen, her pastor (who had since become bishop). He had earlier discouraged her from embarking on her preaching mission, but now he firmly believed in her call. Florence explains that Lee “began her fruitful preaching ministry—at first “in the homes of sympathetic female friends” and later in various churches. The author points out too that “[w]ithin a year [around 1819 or 1820], Lee had ‘broken up house-keeping,’ entrusted her sickly little boy to friends, and was traveling full-time as an itinerant preacher, rejoicing that ‘by the instrumentality of a poor coloured woman, the Lord poured forth his spirit among the peoples.’”<sup>12</sup>

Neither “ordained nor officially licensed,” Lee could preach by invitation only. Thus she had to request an ‘appointment’ to preach. To quiet doubts about her “qualifications or authority” she carried a letter of recommendation from Allen. Though earning no salary, she did sometimes receive freewill offerings. Most of the time, though, she “was dependent on the charity and kindness of the people she met” and hence did not usually know ahead of time where she would be able to lodge or eat. Sometimes she would have to walk long distances—sometimes twenty miles—to her next preaching point.<sup>13</sup> When one remembers that this was pre-Civil-War America one realizes more how vulnerable this preaching woman was. In her thirty years of itinerant preaching Lee faced the following concomitant “rigours” listed by Florence: “certain poverty, strenuous travel, broken health” and an “exhausting pace.” In addition, as a black female she also faced the possibility of “male assaults . . . racial violence, and even lawful enslavement.”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> In Methodist teaching, conversion (involving conviction of sin, and turning from sin) is only a ‘first step’ in the divine transformation of an individual. John Wesley preached a ‘two step’ experience: justification (the forgiveness of sins) and sanctification (the ethical rebirth, so to speak). A sanctified Christian attains ‘holiness’ (which is ‘not behavioural perfection so much as a sense of spiritual perfection and harmony with the will of God’). This second blessing, or second work of grace..., brought one more than inner peace; it supplied one with ‘power to serve God, to exhort sinners, teach the faithful, and eradicate sin’ — W.L. Andrews, (ed.), *Sisters of the Spirit*, 14–15; quoted by Florence, 76.

<sup>11</sup> Lee, *Life and Religious Experience*, 35; quoted by Florence, 77.

<sup>12</sup> Lee, *op. cit.*, 45–46; quoted by Florence, 79.

<sup>13</sup> Florence, 79.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

Lee bears witness to the Spirit's aid in preaching—both to illumine the import of biblical texts to her mind and to give her unction and facility to speak her messages. Florence states that Lee looked for certain visible results: “large numbers” of converts, “liveliness” of meetings, and “repeat invitations”—these were all, as the author phrases it, “favourable signs of the Spirit's presence.” Lee herself reports the following with respect to a meeting in the vicinity of Philadelphia: “[T]he Lord cut loose the stammering tongue, and opened the Scriptures to my mind, so that... we had a most melting, sin-killing, and soul-reviving time.”<sup>15</sup> She tells also of receiving power and boldness in her preaching. Florence cites the reports of other meetings: “In Woodstown, New Jersey, she noted that ‘the minister got happy’ and ‘we had a wonderful display of the spirit [*sic*] of God among us;’ at a camp meeting in Maryland, ‘we had Pentecostal showers;’ at Bethel Church in New York City, ‘The spirit of God came upon me; *I spoke without fear of man, and seemed willing even there to be offered up*; the preachers shouted and prayed, and it was a time long to be remembered.’<sup>16</sup> “Everywhere she went [writes Florence], people of all walks of life—even ‘lawyers, doctors and magistrates’—came expecting fire, and were not disappointed, for ‘the Lord gave his handmaiden power to speak for his great name.’”<sup>17</sup>

Other reports tell of difficulties and trials. Florence cites Jarena Lee's biographical account as follows:

After speaking in Salem, New Jersey, ‘I walked twenty-one miles, and preached with difficulty to a stiff-necked and rebellious people, who I soon left without any animosity for their treatment. They might have respected my message, if not the poor weak servant who brought it to them with so much labour.’<sup>18</sup> Lee did not waste time regretting these experiences. Her many years in the ministry had taught her that opposition itself was mercurial as well as short-lived: ‘Notwithstanding I had my opposers I out-live them, through the strength of Him, that yet loves His faithful followers,’ she wrote in 1836—and meant it literally.<sup>19</sup>

By the end of the 1830s, as Florence notes, the tide began to turn against women and lay itinerant preachers. Lee, now approaching her sixtieth birthday, sensed this—especially when she visited her early ‘home base’ in Philadelphia. The supportive Bishop Allen had been dead for eight years, and Lee was now able to use the church buildings on Thursday

<sup>15</sup> Lee, *Religious Experience and Journal*, 22; quoted by Florence, 81.

<sup>16</sup> Lee, *op. cit.*, 24, 28, 30; quoted by Florence, 81. Emphasis added. It may be that by the phrase “willing to be offered up” Lee means that she was willing to die then and there for the truth she was proclaiming. This readiness to die is often described as the ultimate witness—as the Greek term ‘witness’ is identified with the word ‘martyr.’

<sup>17</sup> Lee, *Religious Experience and Journal*, 46; quoted by Florence, 81.

<sup>18</sup> Lee, *op. cit.*, 23; quoted by Florence, 82.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 78; quoted by Florence, 82.



evenings only—in earlier years she had been able to use them almost anytime, including Sunday afternoons.<sup>20</sup> This ‘closing door,’ this shift in climate, was both ironic and unjust since Lee had been instrumental in ‘growing’ many of the congregations where she was hoping for further opportunities to preach. The number of preaching invitations was diminishing, as Florence explains, because of Lee’s lack of education and preaching style: the “upwardly mobile” and “increasingly educated” black urbanites wanted a more this-worldly focus in the sermons than Lee and other lay itinerants were delivering; and what is more, the A.M.E. Church, like other Protestant groups, began to “stiffen” their credentialing requisites. Also, by this time there was “no shortage” of preachers in the cities.<sup>21</sup>

The now aging Lee determined to ‘wear out rather than rust out’ and decided to spend “more time on the road,” which doubtless meant visiting smaller churches in outlying places. In one of the closing paragraphs of her original autobiographical document (published when she was about 53), she writes:

In all things he has proved himself a God of truth to me: and in his service I am now as much determined to spend and be spent, as at the very first. My ardour for the progress of his cause [the word ‘cause’ is reminiscent of the OT prophet] abates not a whit, so far as I am able to judge, though I am now something more than fifty years of age.<sup>22</sup>

In keeping with accounts of prophetic tradition Lee experienced rejection both by outsiders and by members of the family, so to speak: her book was rejected publicly as being ‘indecipherable.’ Hence, what was meant to be a gesture of honour by her denomination “turned to humiliation.” Florence sums up:

Lee was now an old woman, worn out from over thirty years of constant travel. She probably continued to preach after 1845—no record of her activities exists—but she could hardly have maintained the debilitating pace of itinerant life she once kept. Neither, however, could she keep silent when her life and ministry were demeaned by those who had formerly welcomed her labour and leadership. Once more, Lee took her story to print, believing that she was still God’s handmaiden, and that the Lord ‘gave his handmaiden the power to speak.’<sup>23</sup>

Lee’s is one of several stories which Anna Carter Florence tells in order to describe the manifold nature of preaching as testimony or witness. The latter writes: “Preaching women such as... Jarena Lee *testified to* the freedom in the gospel, a freedom which dramatically transformed lives, and *testified against* prevailing authority and social structures: in

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 88; quoted by Florence, 82.

<sup>21</sup> Florence, 83.

<sup>22</sup> Lee, *Life and Religious Experience*, 48; *Religious Experience and Journal*, 97; quoted by Florence, 83.

<sup>23</sup> Florence, 84.

the process, they *tested* the limits of traditional roles and stereotypes.”<sup>24</sup> In other words, there was here, as the author explains, “a three-fold understanding of testimony: a proclamation of freedom (testimony *for*); a prophetic critique (testimony *against*); and embodiment (a *testing* of the system with one’s very life). Florence also quotes Nathan Hatch’s *The Democratization of American Christianity*, in which the latter points out that 1780–1830, the time of the Second Great Awakening, was a time of both “revival” and “revolution.”<sup>25</sup> Three of the important trends were 1) the desire for, and openness to, religious leaders who were socially ‘closer’ to the growing population of ordinary commoners among the American people; 2) an openness to the “deepest spiritual impulses” of ordinary believers—which considered “dreams, visions, and bursts of enthusiasm” as “direct inspiration from God;” and 3) a strong belief that “religious outsiders” (those outside the mainstream churches) had real potential to bring positive change, by freeing society from “elite authoritarian structures.”<sup>26</sup>

A point that Anna Carter Florence reiterates in her work as a key *leitmotif* is the fact that preaching as testimony or witness constitutes “a preaching practice historically open to ...marginalized persons...and, as she is careful to point out, it is “more than just a coincidence” that this approach “is emerging in the postmodern context as a theory of great power.”<sup>27</sup> Seeing the preaching ministry in this way *inspires confidence*: this is noticeable in Florence’s own analysis and also in the examples she draws from early American history. It is especially true of Jarena Lee, who was marginalized in multiple ways: she was a woman, and a black woman at that. Moreover, she was left a widow in the prime of life; and she was poor. Yet her ministry of the word consistently bore good fruit. It was effective. This was a witness to her that her preaching witness had the Spirit at its source.<sup>28</sup> To show that her preaching was Spirit-directed and approved, Lee reasoned as follows: ‘If [the Lord] has not [called me], how could he consistently bear testimony in favour of my poor labours, in awakening and converting sinners?’<sup>29</sup> Evidently her being used by God, day in and day out, to win people to Christ was a divine confirmation of her call to preach. She

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>25</sup> Hatch, 3–16; referenced by Florence, 87.

<sup>26</sup> Hatch, 9–11; referenced by Florence, 88.

<sup>27</sup> Florence, 101.

<sup>28</sup> In retrospect, when writing about her call to preach and the discouragement she experienced due to her pastor’s comment and her denomination’s position concerning women preachers, Lee had come to realize what had been “at stake:” it was “not her reputation as a woman of propriety,” as Florence observes, “but rather the Spirit’s reputation as the wellspring of possibility.” – Florence, 95.

<sup>29</sup> Lee, *Life and Religious Experience*, 37; quoted by Florence, 90.

also felt confident that eternity would one day confirm and vindicate her ministry. She writes: 'I firmly believe that I have sown seed, in the name of the Lord, which shall appear with its increase at the great day of accounts.'<sup>30</sup>

### 3.3. The Nature of the Speech in Preaching as Witness

When considering preaching as testimony directed by the Spirit, we must necessarily include the matter of personal experience in the discussion, for behind testimony lies experience.<sup>31</sup> And it is experience that calls forth testimony. Well aware that some (even some experts in the field of homiletics) are uncomfortable with "the place of experience in preaching," Florence writes:

We preach from human experience not because it is flashy or captivating to do so, but because in our experience lie traces of our encounters with God . . . There is no benefit to remaining silent about where God has met us in our human life. We are called to ponder these things in our hearts, to interpret them, and ultimately, to preach them. [She later adds:] There is an irresistible progression in this view of experience which makes testimony the inevitable outcome. *Homileticians must explore what it means to be a witness so prophetically and evangelically that there is no question but to preach.*<sup>32</sup>

In conversation with Walter Brueggemann's work Florence notes that testimony is the *Muttersprache* (the mother tongue) of the church.<sup>33</sup> It is, she explains, "...our oldest model for theology and proclamation.... It is a particular kind of speech: bold, daring, concrete, afraid of neither the biblical text nor lived experience."<sup>34</sup> In addition, Brueggemann observes (as Florence takes care to mention) that "true speech thrives in exile, suggesting to us that the displaced or 'decentered' community has access to authoritative witness in surprisingly powerful ways." And in the relevant footnote she elaborates that in his book *Cadences of Home* Brueggemann presents the idea that "the 'decentered' church in a post-Constantinian era may actually find its displacement to be a surprisingly powerful context for proclamation. In this context, testimony is a decentered mode of preaching."<sup>35</sup> Testimony that is engaged in "among other hostile witnesses [so Brueggemann, according to Florence] becomes sharper, more focused."<sup>36</sup> The OT scholar explains that when God's people live and act *as authoritative witnesses*, they *encounter and experience God as their*

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Including (not infrequently) encounters with the Spirit. Cf. the comment by James Dunn in chapter five (below), footnote 48, on page 61.

<sup>32</sup> Florence, 115. Emphasis added.

<sup>33</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 746–47; referenced by Florence, 129.

<sup>34</sup> Florence, 130.

<sup>35</sup> Brueggemann, *Cadences of Home*, 35–56; referenced by Florence, 133, f.n. 49.

<sup>36</sup> Florence, 134.

*Partner*. This is true for Israel and (we can infer) it is true for the church as well. As partners of God, we are compelled to testify, since, as Florence relays Brueggemann's argument, *partnership compels testimony*. This is to be bold testimonial speech; and it is to be spoken with intensity and with "cadences of intimacy."<sup>37</sup>

The cessation of this testimonial speech, we are told, compromises the partnership. Exposing one's encounter-experience is essential, for that is all the proof that the witness has.<sup>38</sup> Without using the word 'risk' Florence reiterates the ever-real risk:

Whether the community [or any hearer(s)] will judge that experience to be a mark or footprint of authority, or whether [they] will attempt to discredit or even erase it, is open to question. Under scrutiny, experience can be as fragile as footprints in sand and as easily covered over. Yet experience itself is not fragile. It is the awareness—and therefore the mark—of partnership with God. Within the community, it is the mark of authority.<sup>39</sup>

In her summary of the section Florence does finally name 'risk.' Speaking of the reception that preaching women in early America received, she writes:

[T]hose listeners who were themselves 'decentered' or marginalized were more inclined to recognize and accept the women's testimonies of their experience as authoritative, while those in positions of power were not. It is a *risky* thing to allow experience as admissible evidence. Experience—the mark of authority...challenges the order with new interpretations. And because it compels testimony, it cannot be silenced, except with the taking of a life.<sup>40</sup>

A "most curious paradox" of testimony, as Florence explains, is the fact that, "even though all our theological claims are located, even though we can make no universal claims, it is still the nature of testimony to take a position and brazenly argue the case, because testimony—as located as it is—is *persuasive* rhetoric. It *is* taking sides." She notes that "particularity" and "locatedness" actually strengthen testimony's persuasion.<sup>41</sup> In addition, testimony often "nurtures affinity," if not identity. There is, in testimony-preaching, a "performative quality," observes Florence, which releases "its own mysterious grace."<sup>42</sup> Lee and others, concludes the author, "were sure that God entered and controlled the act [of their preaching] through some kind of *performance*...of God's own."<sup>43</sup> The purpose of testimony-preaching, then, is persuasion and transformation: the preaching women whom Florence discusses "are boldly claiming the power of this Word to change

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 136.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 136–37.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 137.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. Emphasis added.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 154.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 154–155.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 155. She here defines the word 'performance' etymologically to convey the idea of 'form coming through.'

lives. The *women* testify to *convert*; they testify to convert us!” She adds that these bold preacher-witnesses exhibit an “unflinching certainty in a universally salvific Word...”<sup>44</sup> May God multiply witnesses of that stamp: in a world where death-dealing forces are rampant, they are needed. And they deserve a hearing.

Although Anna Carter Florence does not emphasize the role of the Holy Spirit in preaching as strongly as the theologians and homileticians discussed in the first two chapters of this thesis—nor as strongly as we ourselves might wish—she is nonetheless one of the few voices in modern homiletical theory to tackle a full development of the concept of preaching as testimony or witness. And that offering makes her contribution valuable to the present study. What is said in the previous paragraph about the objective of testimony-preaching, namely persuasion and transformation, is in accord with what was said in the concluding remarks of chapter one.<sup>45</sup> In addition, the notion of partnering with God in the preaching ministry (mentioned above in connection with Brueggemann) is in keeping with what Bucer (following the Pauline analogy<sup>46</sup>) says about preachers being God’s fellow-workers.<sup>47</sup> Truly cooperative effort, to be sure—whether in preaching or any other worthwhile endeavour—necessitates a common purpose and a common spirit. This is especially important for those who are called to speak God’s true word in a world fraught with falsehood. When facing the challenges of speaking God’s truth in a world like the present, it is helpful to become conscious of the reality that we are called to be witnesses to the truth, plainly and simply—and to remember that we can invoke the help of the Holy Spirit for direction in our preaching-witnessing, for the Holy Spirit is also the Spirit of truth.

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 159. Italics are in the text.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. page 11.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. 1 Corinthians 3:6–9.

<sup>47</sup> See above, page 3.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE NATURE OF SPIRIT-DIRECTED WITNESS

#### Foundational Reflections

The idea of preaching as witness or testimony comes close to the act of witnessing, which played such an important role in the early church. When people in the Book of Acts are said to ‘preach the Word’ the author is doubtless not referring to formal sermonizing (as we think of it in our modern church setting) but rather to peoples’ giving verbal witness to the reality and power of the risen Christ in their personal, day-to-day experience. In the writings of the homiletical thinkers discussed in the preceding chapters it has been largely assumed that preaching is fairly formalized speaking-for-God in a formal setting and thus the prerogative of specialists. By viewing preaching as witness and as related to witnessing (often seen as a broader category), it becomes possible to multiply the benefits of spreading the gospel and to accelerate its dissemination. This was noticeable in the work of Anna Carter Florence—especially in her account of the preaching-witness of Jarena Lee. In this chapter it is our aim to build on this idea (clearly prevalent in the nascent church) that preaching, especially preaching-as-witness, is the prerogative (and responsibility) of all believers. A further objective will be to highlight various facets of this type of witness.

According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary<sup>1</sup> the word ‘witness’ is both a noun and a verb. As a noun it can mean 1) testimony, i.e., a bearing witness to the fact of something; 2) one that gives evidence, especially one who testifies in a cause or before a court; 3) one present at a transaction so as to be able to testify that it has taken place; 4) one who has personal knowledge or experience of something; 5) something serving as evidence or proof: sign. As a verb, ‘witness’ can mean 1) to bear witness, to attest or testify; 2) to act as legal witness of; 3) to furnish proof of: betoken; and 4) to be a witness of. The word ‘testimony’ means 1) a solemn declaration made by a witness under oath, especially in a court of law; 2) an authoritative statement: witness; 3) an outward sign: symbol; (a synonym is ‘evidence’)... The related verb ‘testify’ means 1) to make a statement based on personal knowledge or belief: bear witness; and 2) to serve as evidence or proof....

The concept of witness, writes Bernard Cooke, is foundational in the ministry of Jesus and in that of his disciples-turned-apostles: the Lord is the “supreme” witness to

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<sup>1</sup> (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1964, repr. 1973).

God's saving act, and "the Twelve [apostles] are the privileged witnesses to Christ's own witness of death and resurrection."<sup>2</sup> Concerning the concept's application Cooke writes:

'Witness' applies to the testimony given by Jesus or by the early Christians or by Christians today. It is testimony to their consciousness of the action of God in their lives. It applies to the disciples' testimony of their experience of Jesus in his historical existence as well as to their experience of him as the risen Lord. It applies to the continuing activity of those in the church who have exercised the function of retaining and expressing the apostolic witness. *It applies to the entire community's witness to the traditions of earlier Christian faith which it accepts in its own profession of belief.*<sup>3</sup>

Cooke points out that Christian witness "involves a ministry of the word" since it is basically through the lives of Christians and their verbal communication that the message of "God's saving love" is transmitted to humanity. "[T]he very event to which witness is given, explains the author, "is a *speaking*." God has spoken in the past, and still speaks now through Christ. This recalls the opening of the Letter to the Hebrews: "In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son..." (Heb. 1:1–2a). In its turn, the church, says Cooke, "is meant to bear witness...to what God is saying" now, and to God's self-revelation in the past.<sup>4</sup>

#### 4.1. The Prophetic Nature of Spirit-directed Witness

It quickly becomes clear that a very basic feature of the Christian word-witness is its prophetic nature. Cooke, in referring to the work of G. Friedrich, states in this regard that a ministry of God's word is basically prophetic; it is a 'speaking for God,' a bearing witness to the divine intent and divine action.<sup>5</sup> In NT writings this prophetic feature is recognized by the earliest church as basic to its identity and that of its Lord.<sup>6</sup> The writers of the canonical Gospels all portray Jesus as "a prophetic figure" bearing witness to God's call to enter the kingdom; and the Acts narrative and the letters of Paul show that the earliest churches, as Cooke phrases it, "saw themselves as filled with the prophetic Spirit," and viewed it as their mandate to communicate everywhere the message of salvation

<sup>2</sup> The author refers the reader to H. Strathmann, "Martys," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (hereafter referred to as TDNT), vol. 4, 489–504; and to O. Cullmann, *Christology of the New Testament* (London, 1963), 30–50; referenced by Bernard Cooke, *Ministry to Word and Sacraments: History and Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 219.

<sup>3</sup> Cooke, *op. cit.*, 219. Emphasis added.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> G. Friedrich, "Prophetes," *TDNT*, vol. 6, 828–61; referenced by Cooke, 219.

<sup>6</sup> Cooke, 219–20.

through Christ.<sup>7</sup> For Christians, Cooke notes, ‘prophecy’ basically means the preaching of the Gospel (Matt. 4:23). In other words, “[t]o prophesy is to evangelize . . . to bear witness to the death and resurrection of Jesus who is Messiah and Lord.”<sup>8</sup> Although Cooke does not mention the term ‘succession’ in connection with the church’s prophetic ministry, he emphasizes the clear link between the apostles of early Christianity and the Hebrew prophets of ancient times. He writes: “Like Jesus before them, and the Old Testament prophets before him, the early Christian apostles exhorted men to that ‘conversion’ which consists in accepting the saving act of the Lord in ‘his day’ (Acts 2:38; 13:23–41).”<sup>9</sup> The meaning of the Greek verb *propheteuein* (and related words) in the NT is elucidated by the action terms “bear witness,” “testify,” and “evangelize.” Both John and Paul, by making use of these concepts in their writings, give them a Christian connotation. Paul, for instance, as Cooke points out, “describes his own preaching to the Thessalonians as a *martyrion* (2 Thess. 1:10). Also, in the early part of his first letter to the Corinthians, the apostle “gives as the object of that preaching to *martyrion tou theou*”—seemingly “an application of the notion of witness to the activity of Jesus himself.”<sup>10</sup>

Important too for the argument of the present study is that Cooke shows the expansiveness and range of the action of witness; he states: “By the very nature of faith, *all* believers in the community share in this witness to God; *all* exercise a prophetic function.”<sup>11</sup> Hence, believers (not only those who preach in an official capacity) may rightfully view themselves as prophetic witnesses. Indeed, as was mentioned earlier, the Spirit that Christians received was at the outset recognized to be a ‘prophetic’ Spirit.

It is the Johannine writings (Cooke says) which “make explicit” the connection between the Word and prophetic witness. He points out that “the Christian act of bearing witness to Christ is a prophetic act of communicating the word of God.”<sup>12</sup> The Holy Spirit too acts as a witness. In this regard, Cooke says: “While the Spirit already bears witness to Jesus during his earthly ministry, it is above all in the post-Resurrection situation that this Spirit witness will reach its full expression (John 15:26), a witness that will work through the disciples themselves (John 15:27). The written record of the fourth Gospel is a witness

<sup>7</sup> A. Richardson, *Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament* (New York: 1958), 103–20; referenced by Cooke, 220.

<sup>8</sup> Friedrich, 854–55; referenced by Cooke, 220.

<sup>9</sup> Cooke, 220.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. (See right-hand column). Emphasis added.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 221.



to Christ (19:35; 21:24), and so too is “the prophetic communication of the message of Revelation (Rev. 1:9–10; 22:16).” Other witnessing acts in the Book of Revelation, as Cooke points out, are the preaching of the gospel (2:13; 11:3, 7) and the giving of one’s life for the cause of Christ (12:11; 17:6).<sup>13</sup> Important for our thesis is the link that the Johannine writings make between witnessing and the Holy Spirit. The Gospel and letters attributed to John convey expressly, as Cooke observes, that “the Christian witness to Jesus’ death and resurrection is the action of the Spirit.” For instance, in the so-called ‘last discourse’ there is an immediate linking of “the witness given to Christ by the Spirit” with that to be given by the disciples (John 15:26–27).<sup>14</sup>

Cooke states further: “[I]n the case of Christians, the Spirit witnesses within their own consciousness and faith to the reality of the death and resurrection of Jesus, to the fidelity of the Father who sent him, and to their own identity as prophetic witnesses to Christ and as sons of the father. This would seem to be the mentality that is reflected in the text of Revelation 19:10: ‘I am a fellow servant of yours and of your brothers who possess the witness (*martyria*) of Jesus. . . . The witness of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.’ The author adds in the related note that the interpretation given in the Jerusalem Bible downplays the challenge urging ongoing activity of bearing witness *to* Christ, and “seems to negate the explicit statement of the text: ‘*he marturia Iesou estin to pneuma tes propheteias*.’ In keeping with the striking statement in this text, Cooke summarizes his view of the early church’s self-understanding as follows:

Jesus himself, filled with the Spirit of prophecy and conscious of his own prophetic role, bore witness in his public ministry of word and deed to the event of salvation. This event, which basically he himself was, was already taking place in his ministry but would reach its eschatological stage with his own final act of witness, his death and resurrection. Though no longer visibly active, the risen Lord continues his prophetic witness to the saving love of his Father; this he does *by communicating to his disciples his own prophetic Spirit*. Filled with this Spirit, the early Christians go out to proclaim the gospel so that this saving word of God can bring eternal life to men. The ministry of the church is, like that of Christ himself, essentially a ministry of the life-giving word of God. Though more noticeable exercise of this prophetic activity is manifested by certain leaders, pre-eminently by the apostles but also by others gifted with special charisms, *the prophetic function belongs to the entire community; it is a prophetic people* (Acts 2:15–33).<sup>15</sup>

The NT writings typically presume that God can use humans through whom to speak—and that the latter can thus speak much like the charismatic prophets of the OT.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Cooke, 221.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 222. Emphasis added.

Cooke actually uses the verbal form of the noun ‘succession’ when he states: “It is this same prophetic office to which the entire Christian people *succeeds*, though certain individuals within the community apparently possess specialized prophetic gifts.”<sup>16</sup> He goes on to say: “Those within the community who function in special ways as prophets seem to do so intermittently and under occasional direct impulse of the Spirit, rather than by virtue of some official designation—although the Book of Acts (with its mention of Agabus) and the *Didaché* (with its instructions to take very seriously the Spirit-inspired message of a prophet) present evidence for certain church leaders who had and exercised special prophetic gifts. Early Christian communities prayed for guidance through such inspired utterance, and they record that they were so guided (Acts 13:1–3). Cooke, for his part, consistently shows a penchant for emphasizing the extension of the witnessing task and of a general prophetic function to all believers. He observes: “Almost indistinguishable from the function of witness is that of prophet.” He makes it clear that “[the entire Christian] community is prophetic and it exercises its prophetic role by bearing witness to its risen Lord.”<sup>17</sup>

#### **4.2. The Charismatic Nature of Spirit-directed Witness**

Bernard Cooke also points out that, beyond the “general prophetism” of the church, there is “a special charism of prophecy.” And the latter is for the sake of the former. He writes:

Charismatic prophecy is not restricted to Old Testament times; though we have largely lost sight of the fact, prophecy reaches its fulfillment in Christ and in the Christian period of history. Genuine prophets there have been, there are, and there will be in the church. The problem the Christian community always faces is to discover and nurture them, to distinguish the genuine from the false, to accept them despite the challenge they always present. In our own day there is a critical need to reinstate the prophetic voice in the counsels of the church, but to do this, we must understand more accurately what Christian prophetism is, and here the theologian can be a support to the authentic prophet.<sup>18</sup>

An important aspect of this gifting, says Cooke, is “the ability of discern the movement of Christ’s Spirit” in the church and in the world at large. Highlighting the importance of this charism for the life of the church, he states: “To discover the impulse of the Spirit, to distinguish it from other ‘spirits’. . . to interiorize that Spirit as the very

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<sup>16</sup> Cooke, 229. Emphasis added.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 330.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

nucleus of its life of faith”—all of this, he says, is “basic to Christian existence.”<sup>19</sup> He goes on to state: “It is as basic as hearing the word of God, for ‘word’ and ‘spirit’ are distinct but inseparable manifestations of God. The special prophetic gift involves . . . increased sensitivity to the Spirit’s impulse, and increased awareness of which courses of Christian action resonate compatibly with that Spirit and which actions do not.” He adds: “The prophet is able to say to the community, ‘It seems good to the Spirit....’” Though Cooke denies predictive gifting to the New Testament prophet, he specifies that “the genuine prophet can bear witness to the Spirit’s ‘message’ to the community about the manner in which [the] future should be fashioned; he can give guidance for the community as it faces decisions.”<sup>20</sup>

#### 4.2.1. The Prophetic Charism and Preaching

When linking prophetic gifting and preaching, Cooke remarks: “The widespread need for competent preachers would suggest that not all preachers possess the specialized prophetic charism, though preaching is proper to the prophet and some measure of the prophetic gift would seem most appropriate to the preacher. However, preaching is itself a diversified activity. . . .” Subsequently he adds: “[P]reaching needs to be directed to Christians and non-Christians, according to the needs for preevangelization, evangelization, or catechesis. Its prominent purpose can be to inform, to exhort, to motivate, or to encourage; but none of these goals will be absent from genuine preaching.”<sup>21</sup>

Preaching . . . does not seem to be as patently or simply charismatic as prophecy. Even in the case of the preacher who clearly has the special prophetic charism and function, effective preaching involves a certain element of art, i.e., of humanly acquired proficiency. And in the case of the preacher who has no special prophetic endowment, insights gained from theological study and from reflective human experience can complement the basic prophetism of Christian faith and equip a person to nurture the faith of the community through preaching.<sup>22</sup>

In the face of the need for widespread evangelism in our contemporary setting (whatever may have been said of the preacher functioning in an official, specialized capacity), there is reason to involve both clergy and laity in the task of mission and outreach. “[T]here is need [observes Cooke] for a massive evangelizing, a preaching of the gospel that will have to be much different from anything in the past, for it must be directed to people and societies as they actually are with all the cultural pluralism and seething change and social upheaval

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Cooke, 330–31. It would be interesting to hear what Cooke would say concerning the ‘prophet’ Agabus, who predicted wide-spread famine (cf. Acts 11:27–28), and also Paul’s arrest in Jerusalem (21:10–11).

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 331–32.

<sup>22</sup> Cooke, 332.

that characterize today's world."<sup>23</sup> He elaborates: "For several decades there has been an emerging consciousness in all the Christian churches that this situation demands something new, and that somehow the laity (i.e., the nonclergy) who are part of this turbulent world must be the point of contact and the instruments of evangelization. Undoubtedly, this long overdue recognition that a basic prophetic function belongs to the entire Christian people should be encouraged....."<sup>24</sup> It is my view (in this regard) that the best way to encourage the prophetic function of all believers is to encourage all to receive the various dimensions of the Spirit, as given by the Spirit-Bestower and Spirit-Baptizer, including that of charismatic empowerment for bold witness. This is exemplified in the first recorded Christian sermon and encouraged in its concluding challenge and promise (Acts 2:38, 39).

#### **4.2.2. The Spirit as Charism in African-American and Pentecostal Preaching**

When speaking of charisms or charismata it is well to remember at the outset that the Holy Spirit-as-indwelling-Person is the supreme charism. Whereas some theologies of preaching focus on the functional aspects of the Spirit's involvement in witness and preaching, others (such as the Black American heritage, and the Pentecostal approach too) focus on the overall working of the Spirit in and through the word and person of the preacher. In addition, there is in these last-mentioned traditions more focus on the whole personality (including the emotive dimension) of both the Spirit and the human instrument. For example, in African-American homiletician Henry Mitchell's view, faith is born in the "intuitive and emotive sectors of consciousness," which are most directly "affected by experiential encounter." The Spirit, he maintains, uses these "channels" to beget faith. What then, we may ask, is the function of the preached Word? A synergistic dynamic is implied in Mitchell's description of the preaching moment. He writes: "Sermons are reasonable and relevant sequences of biblical affirmations planted in or offered to the intuitive consciousness of the hearers, by way of what might be called homiletical coworkers of the Spirit."<sup>25</sup>

An encounter with the Spirit, especially Spirit baptism, which affects the deepest areas of a person's psyche, 'the innermost being' (Jn. 7:38, NASB), can greatly aid preachers in rising above what Mitchell calls "cultural biases against the emotive" dimension of the hearers.<sup>26</sup> Consequently, preaching as a Spirit-directed witness leads one quite naturally

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 333.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Henry H. Mitchell, *Celebration and Experience in Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 23–25.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 35.

to deal with the whole person of the hearer. As such witnesses, preachers are constrained to speak what they have seen and heard in communion with the Spirit, and with the revealed Word. It is a case of the *whole* person of the preacher calling out to the *whole* person of the hearer at a deep and meaningful level. It is, in a real sense, 'deep calling unto deep.' Emotion, therefore—even heightened emotion—will have its rightful place in the delivery of the sermon. To be sure, ecstasy is not at all a pejorative term for Mitchell, as it may have been for White homiletics of similar denominational affiliation writing before his time (notably J. Ithel Jones).<sup>27</sup> Indeed, the celebratory climax of the sermon "is the ecstatic reinforcement (an important expression for Mitchell) of the Word for all people."<sup>28</sup>

All that we preach, insists Mitchell, must issue from the inner person of the preacher; it "must be projected as from the very soul...." Interestingly, this resonates with the Temple-proclamation of Jesus that 'rivers of living water' will flow forth from the person who has drunk of the Spirit (John 7:37, 38). The Pentecostal homiletics might add here that the gift of glossolalia can aid the preacher-witness (because the gift is designed for one's self-edification) to come to the preaching task with a Spirit-inspired confidence; and the gift, though meant for private communion with God in the Spirit, is not for that reason unrelated to the public ministry of preaching. This line of reasoning maintains that what "issues" from the preacher's "inner person" (to use Mitchell's turn of phrase) will be strengthened through the very basic and transrational act of speaking to God beforehand in an unknown tongue.<sup>29</sup>

The vision of faith (adopting a 'witness' stance) is crucial in Mitchell's theology of holistic preaching. Note what he recommends as a question to ask oneself while preparing to preach: "Am I really concerned with clever, scholarly data and abstract ideas, or do I *see and feel* what I'm talking about?" The fact that the preacher has seen the truth (and

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<sup>27</sup> Cf. chapter two above.

<sup>28</sup> Mitchell, 34.

<sup>29</sup> Jones, when comparing glossolalia with prophecy, claims that in the latter "we have a different category altogether. . ." He writes that speaking in tongues "is far inferior to prophesying." — *The Holy Spirit and Christian Preaching*, 27. It is clear from the first comment that Jones prefers to see the difference between these charismata rather than their points of similarity, of which two come to mind: that both are spiritual gifts, given by God the Spirit for beneficent purposes; and that both are Spirit-inspired speech. A common classical Pentecostal 'categorization' is to place them together under 'the utterance gifts.'

Moreover, to say that glossolalia is "far inferior" to prophesying is a little unfair to the former—it is akin to saying that a work-horse is 'far inferior' to a riding-horse. More helpful, I believe, is to see that both are horses of undeniable value, but that they serve different ends. When self-edification is the need of the moment (and it often is, when one is involved in the spiritual combat that constitutes preaching the gospel), then what gift is more regularly necessary than glossolalia? And is it not reasonable to believe that preachers who are themselves edified are best positioned to edify their hearers?

‘bought’ it, to use Bunyan’s phrase<sup>30</sup>) is necessary to achieve “formation in consciousness,” that is, to make the gospel “real in all sectors of [the hearer’s] consciousness.” As Mitchell points out, the “one ruling concern is to help persons visualize and relate holistically....” The objective, then, involves showing others what we have seen. The preacher who is best positioned to “get a witness” from the hearers is *the preacher who functions as a witness*. Furthermore, hearers are most effectively brought into harmony with God’s will when they have celebrated; and, as Mitchell puts it, they “celebrate best what they have best visualized and experienced.”<sup>31</sup> This kind of preaching will be effective; and it will have necessitated the help of the Holy Spirit and the gifts made available through the Spirit.<sup>32</sup>

#### 4.3. The Authoritative Nature of Spirit-directed Witness

Although some reference has already been made to the authority of the anointed preaching ministry of Jesus, and to the authority of Christian preachers (in our earlier discussion of Forbes’ and Calvin’s work respectively), something more needs to be said regarding this important aspect of Spirit-directed witness. Forbes mentions that in John’s Gospel account the disciples received “a kind of empowerment from beyond [this earthly realm].” It was that authority that enabled Jesus to “breathe upon them” and commission them to continue his work. The Riverside pastor identifies the Spirit with authority when he comments: “Ruah, the holy wind, gets around in so many different forms. And Jesus told them to receive the Holy Spirit and the authority that went with it.”<sup>33</sup> Mark’s Gospel account reports that they went forth preaching, with divine co-operation and confirmation.

Authoritative witness includes the idea of influence, which in turn implies leadership—in a Christian context, it should be noted that the authority, the influence, and the leadership all originate with the Holy Spirit. The following account is an example of what influential Spirit-directed witness can look like. In 1951 David du Plessis, a Pentecostal leader originally from South Africa, claims to have experienced a prompting of the Spirit to “witness” to the leaders of the newly-formed World Council of Churches.<sup>34</sup> When du Plessis (who lived at that time in Connecticut) told his wife he was going to New

<sup>30</sup> John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, Part One, The Sixth Stage (at Vanity Fair). Cf. also Prov. 23:23.

<sup>31</sup> Mitchell, 69.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 54

<sup>33</sup> Forbes, *op. cit.*, 93.

<sup>34</sup> David J. du Plessis, *The Spirit Bade Me Go: The Astounding Move of God in the Denominational Churches* (Oakland, CA: David J. du Plessis, 1960, 1962, 1963), 13.

York to “go and witness to the WCC leaders” she said, ‘What will you try next?’, but he simply replied: “I am not trying anything, I am just obeying the Lord. But I will be back by lunch.” Once at the offices on Fifth Avenue he made it clear who he was—“a Pentecostal, and one of the worst, actually the world secretary.” He had decided on the train ride into the city to be very direct and straightforward with the leaders (since he was expecting to be rejected anyway); but, as it turned out, he was invited to speak his mind, with the comment ‘Go on, tell us some more. We have been waiting for a fellow like you to come and talk to us.’ Du Plessis spoke to them all morning and then apologized for taking so much of their time; but they wanted to hear still more, and so he was invited to stay for lunch. The most friendly and receptive of the leaders offered to pay for his lunch if he would keep talking. He ended up ‘witnessing’ all afternoon as well, staying at the office until closing time. That was his “first encounter” with the WCC. (It is important to note that du Plessis obeyed the prompting to make the ‘witnessing’ contact despite the fact that he expected to be rejected, and despite the fact that his own wife did not at first react favourably. It is important to note also that, because of his numerous fraternal initiatives among the historic churches, du Plessis experienced the rejection of his own denomination<sup>35</sup> for a lengthy period of time.)

In 1952 du Plessis was invited to go to the International Missionary Council, extended Assembly, at Willingen, Germany. This was his “first experience” as a Pentecostal in an “ecumenical” convention. Dr. John Mackay, a seminary president who also served as the president of the I.M.C., introduced du Plessis as his ‘great Pentecostal friend.’ He goes on to recount that on the following day a speaker complained that Christianity had become ‘so institutionalized that it would be a blessing if some of these institutions burned down.’ It was at that point that Mackay invited du Plessis to come and speak for ten minutes; he introduced him initially as ‘a friend who came from a movement that had encircled the world with missions in less than a half century, and that without institutions. President Mackay asked him specifically to relate *why* and *how* the Pentecostals had ‘accomplished so much in so short a time.’<sup>36</sup> When explaining the ‘why’ of Pentecostal success in missions du Plessis replied that it was because the missionaries were ‘Pentecostal’—not primarily because they spoke with tongues but because of the *power* of the Spirit that accompanies the experience of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. He explained that “untrained” and “sometimes illiterate people” went out to evangelize, without the backing

<sup>35</sup> The Assemblies of God took away his ordination credentials but later reinstated him.

<sup>36</sup> du Plessis, *The Spirit Bade Me Go*, 14.

of a board or institution, but “simply guided by the Holy Spirit” who “confirmed their preaching with ‘signs following,’ as the Synoptic writers put it in the conclusions to their Gospel accounts.”<sup>37</sup>

In answer to the ‘how’ question du Plessis says that the Pentecostals spread the message of the Good News through “the old-fashioned apostolic way of witnessing—each-one-tell-one;” and he refers to the experience of the earliest Christians in Jerusalem, who, when they were persecuted there, spread out across the Mediterranean world, “preaching the Word” everywhere. Nowadays the general method, says du Plessis [writing in the 60s], is to send out the leaders, and “the church members have nothing to say.” He explains:

The Pentecostal Movement started out as a witnessing community. However[,] you cannot teach people to be witnesses; they become witnesses when they have an experience of something. The courts of our day will not accept a ‘prompted’ witness. A good Pentecostal witness is one who can tell how he [or she] got saved and healed and baptized in the Holy Spirit. *Such a testimony is more powerful than a sermon [on the topic of] salvation and healing and the Holy Spirit.*<sup>38</sup>

This is important: the experience of the Spirit’s power compels testimony and witness—even among rank-and-file believers. Formal training, of itself, will *not* make one a witness.

A few years later du Plessis had another opportunity to speak to WCC leaders—this time at a retreat in Connecticut (his old initial home area in the States). He recalls it as “one of [his] greatest experiences in this ministry.” He had been asked to be “devastatingly frank” about Pentecost as a Movement and as an experience and he sensed he should “seek the face of the Lord” as to what to say. He admits that in the past he would have spoken in a denunciatory and judgmental way, but now he prayed, ‘Lord, what would You have me to do[?]’ He recounts his experience as follows:

That morning something happened to me. After a few introductory words I suddenly felt a warm glow come over me. I knew this was the Holy Spirit taking over, but what was He doing to me? Instead of the old harsh spirit of criticism and condemnation in my heart, I now felt such love and compassion for these ecclesiastical leaders that I would rather have died for them than pass sentence on them. All at once I knew that the Holy Spirit was in control and I was beside myself and yet sober as a judge (2 Cor. 5:13). Thank God, from that day on I knew what it meant to minister along the ‘more excellent way’ (1 Cor. 12:31). This indeed is the technique of the Holy Spirit.<sup>39</sup>

Du Plessis sensed that the Spirit was doing a similar work in the hearts of his hearers. In the question-and-answer period, there was, as he puts it, “an unaffected desire to know all

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 14–15.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 15. Emphasis added.

<sup>39</sup> du Plessis, 16.



about the gifts and ministries of the Holy Spirit.” The saying of Christ in Mark 13:11, he claims, was “made real” to him that morning.<sup>40</sup>

In July of 1960 du Plessis attended the WCC’s Consultation on Evangelism. In the “opening address” Dr. D.T. Niles of Ceylon [now Sri Lanka] laid a foundation for the discussions on evangelism. He subsequently spoke to du Plessis personally, encouraging him to “emphasize the importance of the Holy Spirit in any and all attempts at evangelism by every member, and every church, and by any preacher or evangelist.”<sup>41</sup> He reports on what occurred later: “Each time when it seemed as if the meeting would move toward a discussion on the teaching of the Lord rather than on Christ himself as the way, the truth and the life, Dr. Markus Barth (son of Prof. Karl Barth of Basel) would call them back to the person of Christ. God gave us His Son, not His creed or doctrines which are useless unless we learn to know the living Christ. Then I could add: But only the Holy Spirit can reveal and declare the living Christ, *and that is why so much preaching today is sterile and without power.*”<sup>42</sup> Du Plessis goes on immediately to say: “[Many preachers] speak as the Pharisees and not as Christ, [who spoke] with authority. Then I could point out that the Holy Spirit can dwell only in blood-cleansed and redeemed men who have become His temples. Without regeneration there can be no real receiving of the Holy Spirit, and there are two definite experiences.”<sup>43</sup> ‘God has no grandsons’; therefore we cannot inherit these blessings from our forebears but must be born of God to become the sons of God. In the final report, the statement ‘God has no grandsons’<sup>44</sup> was taken up as fundamental to the reasons for cold and formal Christianity. The whole Consultation was one of the most *spiritual* and most *vital* discussions I have ever attended in ecumenical meetings.”<sup>45</sup>

The following Monday morning (August 8) du Plessis had another opportunity to speak—this time with regard to ‘the witnessing of members.’ His argument was frank: “How can anyone witness when he has no knowledge or experience of the matter? One must be born again. In this, Dr. Mackay and others backed me strongly. Oh, the battle

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. The author quotes the KJV text: “But when they shall lead you . . . take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, *but the Holy Ghost.*” Italics in text.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>42</sup> du Plessis, 23. Emphasis added.

<sup>43</sup> As a Pentecostal, du Plessis stresses the importance of a two-fold experience with God: 1) regeneration; and 2) reception of Spirit baptism.

<sup>44</sup> The author had a special tract printed about his ‘revelation’ that ‘God has no grand-children.’ In Pentecostal (and ecumenical) circles he is remembered chiefly for emphasizing this insight in his lectures.

<sup>45</sup> du Plessis, 23. Emphasis added.

between the laity and the ministry!” Du Plessis also stated: “It seems that we in the Pentecostal Movement are seeking to develop a stronger ministry and the [historic] churches are seeking to get back to a more effective witnessing of the laity. We had that and that is why the Movement has swept the world in less than half a century.” To his Pentecostal hearers (and readers) he declares: “Brethren, in the name of Christ I plead, let us not lose the best we ever had—the witness of all members who are filled with the Spirit.”<sup>46</sup>

This overview of du Plessis’ ministry illustrates how Spirit-sensitivity resulting from the charismatic dimension of Spirit baptism can enable witness and effective ecumenical collaboration. Note that it was du Plessis who took the initiative<sup>47</sup> to make the acquaintance of the WCC leaders. Witness and preaching, he believed, can rediscover its lost dynamism by appropriating what the earliest Christians experienced at the beginning: a Spirit immersion resulting in spiritual power. David du Plessis would certainly point out that no particular group has a monopoly on the Spirit’s power or authority. Anyone desiring the help of the Holy Spirit in witnessing and proclaiming the gospel is a candidate to experience the empowerment and direction of the prophetic, charismatic, and authoritative Spirit. This is made clearer as we consider the NT writings of Luke, a ‘charismatic’ thinker and theologian<sup>48</sup> in his own right.

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 24–25.

<sup>47</sup> du Plessis himself would insist (and *does* insist) that it was the Holy Spirit’s initiative and prompting.

<sup>48</sup> Since the middle of the twentieth century, and especially since the 70s, there has been increasing emphasis on the status of Luke as a theologian, or on the theology in Luke’s writings. Works that can be mentioned in this regard are the following: I. Howard Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian* (London: Paternoster, 1970); J.C. O’Neill, *The Theology of Acts*. 2d ed. (London: SPCK, 1970); Helmut Flender, *Heil und Geschichte in der Theologie des Lukas* (Munich: Kaiser, 1965), Eng. trans. by R.H. and I. Fuller: *St. Luke: Theologian of Redemptive History* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967);—even the well-known redactionist-critic Hans Conzelmann, writing in the 50s, speaks of Luke as a theologian. See his *Die Mitte der Zeit: Studien zur Theologie des Lukas*. BHT 17. Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck. Eng. trans. by G. Buswell: *The Theology of St. Luke* (New York: Harper, 1960, repr. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982. Cf. also his *Grundriss der Theologie des Neuen Testaments*. 2d ed. (Munich: Christian Kaiser Verlag, 1968), Eng. trans. by John Bowden: *An Outline of the Theology of the New Testament* (Chatham: SCM Press, 1969), 149–152. In this last-mentioned work Conzelmann, referring to Luke’s theology as “[representing] an average type,” and seemingly in agreement that his work can be designated as ‘early catholic,’ states: [A writing] becomes ‘catholic’ only when the tradition is guaranteed in an institutional way, by teaching ministry and church ordinances, and above all by a succession in ministry; when the spirit and the sacraments are bound to an institution, when the church makes itself the legally constituted form of salvation Luke knows the office of apostle, but has no idea of succession....” 149. To say that Luke “has no idea” of *apostolic* succession appears correct, but in this study we propose the idea that Luke is propounding the idea of *prophetic* succession—a concept that is central to our homiletical focus.

For the NT writer Roger Stronstad, writing in the early 80s, the theology of Luke is described as ‘charismatic;’ and thus, for the latter, the writings of Luke occupy a unique place—and one of special importance—in the canon of scripture. In other words, he would not agree with the idea that Luke’s theology “represents an average type.” In the next chapter, we thus give a hearing to a new voice in Lucan studies, one which presents an alternative to what has long been said and written in Protestant circles.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE SPIRIT'S WITNESSING ACTIVITY IN LUKE-ACTS

#### Introduction

Accepting Luke as a theologian, says NT writer Roger Stronstad, makes Luke-Acts “a legitimate data base” for pneumatology; and recognizing that Luke is, as he puts it, “independent of Paul”<sup>1</sup> will widen the NT base for teaching concerning the Holy Spirit.<sup>2</sup> Stronstad calls for the adoption of “a fresh methodological approach<sup>3</sup> to the interpretation of the historical narratives in Luke-Acts.” He mentions four possible “categories” to describe these narratives: 1) episodic, 2) typological, 3) programmatic, and/or 4) paradigmatic. He explains that “just as the infancy narrative (Luke 1:5–2:52) is programmatic for the mission of Jesus to Israel, so the Pentecost narrative is programmatic for the mission of the disciples from Jerusalem to Judea to Samaria to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). Finally, just as the anointing of Jesus (Luke 3:22; 4:18) is a paradigm for the subsequent Spirit baptism of the disciples (Acts 1:5; 2:4), so the gift of the Spirit to the disciples is a paradigm for God’s people throughout the ‘last days’ as a charismatic community of the Spirit—a prophethood of all believers (Acts 2:16–21). The four above-mentioned “categories,” claims Stronstad, are crucial to interpreting Luke’s writings.<sup>4</sup> He then concludes the section as follows:

[R]ather than providing a flimsy foundation upon which to erect a doctrine of the Holy Spirit, as is commonly alleged, the historical accounts of the activity of the Spirit in Acts

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<sup>1</sup> Drawing upon the work of I. Howard Marshall—*Luke: Historian and Theologian*, Contemporary Evangelical Perspectives (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970)—Roger Stronstad emphasizes that Luke should be regarded as “an independent theologian in his own right,” without trying to press him into a “Pauline mold.” This point is stressed in Stronstad’s book *The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1984), 11–12. Moreover, we should say at the outset of this chapter that while mainline Protestant historical-critical scholarship has denied that Luke’s writings are reliable ‘windows’ to the interior experience of Jesus and his earliest followers, Pentecostal and charismatic thinkers have consistently used these documents to explain—and to experience—the dynamism of early Christianity. Please see comments regarding this chapter in the introduction, x.

<sup>2</sup> Stronstad, *op. cit.*, 11.

<sup>3</sup> Some methodological approaches countered by Stronstad are the three-epoch hypothesis of Hans Conzelmann, (which includes his ‘middle-of-time’ schema); the view of W.F. Lofthouse, who denies Synoptic influence with regard to the material about the Spirit in Acts(!); and the argument of J.H.E. Hull, who claims there is “discontinuity even for identical terminology which describes the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts.” Against the aforementioned views, Stronstad affirms both historical and theological continuity in the work of Luke.

<sup>4</sup> Stronstad, 8–9.

provide a firm foundation for erecting a doctrine of the Spirit which has normative implications for the mission and religious experience of the contemporary church.<sup>5</sup>

We have already made mention of the link between the Spirit's nature and activity and prophetic communication. Stronstad states that this connection already becomes clear in the writings of the OT. A recurrent sign of the Spirit's presence and activity in the OT, he points out, is prophecy. This occurred in the experience of the newly appointed elders in Moses' time; and later, in the life of Israel's first two kings, Saul and David (1 Sam. 10:9b–11; 2 Sam. 23:2). It is noteworthy for us that in the Chronicles of the OT, one is struck by the fact that, as Stronstad expresses it, "the description of the gift of the Spirit is always followed by a report of direct speech."<sup>6</sup> Moreover, in Isaiah 59:21 there is a significant juxtaposition of the Spirit with the divine word to be communicated to and through God's people. The text reads: 'My Spirit which is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your offspring, nor from the mouth of your offspring's offspring,' says the Lord, 'from now and forever.' The promised presence of the Spirit and the Word is, once realized, to be something perpetual, abiding. This is, in view of our present theme of preaching as Spirit-directed witness, quite remarkable: *it is God's Spirit who is meant to enable human beings to communicate God's words*. This is true for the OT prophets, for God's ancient people as a whole, for John the Baptist, for Jesus, for his disciples, and for Christians of all times. It is tragic that the church has often suffered times of prophetic inertia and anaemia. This is doubtless due (in large part) to our neglect of returning to the Source of dynamic prophetic witness, which naturally includes verbal witness. The Source, given more fully now than in Isaiah's time, is none other than the Holy Spirit.

It is evident that the prophetic gift of the Spirit typically has "experiential" and "functional" facets: it sometimes, as Stronstad observes, "serves as an explicit sign to authenticate or confirm God's call to service" and sometimes it "endows skills appropriate for this call to leadership and service."<sup>7</sup> The above observations apply not only to the historical records but also to the prophetic writings, including the messianic passages and the descriptions of the coming Messianic Age (Isaiah 11:2; 48:16; 61:1; Joel 2:28–29). Having cited Isaiah 48:16, Stronstad remarks: "[T]he gift of the Spirit gives the Messiah a

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 9. This view diverges from earlier approaches to Pneumatology, yet it is finding some support in non-charismatic quarters—please see footnotes 25 and 39 below.

<sup>6</sup> Stronstad, 22.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 22–23.

status unequalled among either David's sons or the prophets, for it puts him in the tradition of Israel's great charismatic founders—Moses, Joshua, and David.”<sup>8</sup> In addition to this special status, accorded through divine vocation, there is also the equipping with skills to carry out this divine call—all through the gift of the Spirit.

### **5.1. Jesus as the Spirit-directed Witness *par excellence***

What begins in the Gospel of Luke as the story of Jesus, “the unique charismatic Prophet”, develops (in Acts), says Stronstad, into the story of Jesus' disciples and witnesses, “a community of charismatic prophets.”<sup>9</sup> And all this is “possible only through the anointing, empowering, and leading of the Holy Spirit. It is this Lukan emphasis on a charismatic mission,” says the NT writer, “which contrasts with the minimal role of the Holy Spirit” in the other Synoptic Gospels.<sup>10</sup> Stronstad points out that in the infancy narrative, as given by Luke, there are, besides the reference to the creative power of God, references to the charismatic, prophetic activity of the Spirit as well. Several people, including Elizabeth and Zechariah and later Simeon experience the Spirit coming upon them, and they prophesy. This is evidence that prophetic inspiration has returned to Israel.<sup>11</sup> The writer points out that Luke links the birth narrative of John the Baptist with that of Jesus and shows points of similarity between their callings. He asserts: “The people not only recognized [John the Baptist] to be a prophet (20:6), however, but stirred by his preaching also wondered ‘whether he might be the Christ’ (3:15). Contemporary Judaism identified the prophetic and messianic vocation.” He adds: “This identification of the prophetic and messianic functions in John's ministry is the key to the interpretation of Jesus' Spirit-anointed charismatic ministry.”<sup>12</sup>

He who is to baptize in the Holy Spirit, says the writer, “must first be anointed by the Spirit (3:22; 4:18). In this way Jesus becomes the Christ, the Anointed One, not only possessing the Spirit, but also subject to the leading of the Spirit and dependent upon the empowering of the Spirit (4:1, 14).” Stronstad also adds: “In Luke's theology, Jesus has become the charismatic Christ—the unique bearer of the Spirit.”<sup>13</sup> He ascribes significance

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>11</sup> Stronstad, 37. After 400 years of silence, the restoration of prophetic inspiration comes to pass: the Gospel corpus, and especially Luke in his two-volume narrative, provides the exciting account of this restoration.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 39.

to the phraseology Luke uses to describe the descent of the Spirit upon Jesus at his baptism. Luke (in 3:22) says that the Spirit came down ‘*in bodily form* like a dove.’ This means, reasons Stronstad, that the coming of the Spirit upon Jesus was neither “mystical” nor “visionary.” It was, as he puts it, “rather, an objective, externalized, and physical manifestation of the Spirit.” Here, notes the writer, we have two signs—the descent of the Spirit, and the voice from heaven—which signal the restoration of communication between God and Israel.<sup>14</sup>

Stronstad mentions that when Jesus (in Luke 4:18, 19) gives the Nazareth sermon based on Isaiah 61:1, he here offers something of his understanding of the coming of the Spirit upon him. In this famous Lukan text we learn that the ministry of Christ is to be one of Good News and liberation and healing.<sup>15</sup> The method of this ministry is to be prophetic proclamation. The reference to preaching or proclaiming is thrice repeated. It is, then, to be a ministry of the inspired prophetic Word. Stronstad notes that the Jews understood Isaiah 61:1 “in prophetic terms.” He explains: “The Targum of Jonathan renders the Hebrew text of Isaiah 61:1 in Aramaic as, ‘The Spirit of prophecy from before the Lord God is upon me.’”<sup>16</sup> For Stronstad it is “highly probable” that the “Aramaic rendering” mentioned above “was part of the Nazareth service.” This detail, though, “disappeared” when Luke (or his source) “assimilated the text to the Greek Septuagint translation of Isaiah.”<sup>17</sup> The fact that Jesus is here making a prophetic claim—and the fact too that he is telling stories about God healing Gentiles!<sup>18</sup>—draws a reaction from his hometown crowd that quickly becomes nasty. His preaching is rejected, and Jesus is not surprised (4:24). Their attempt to kill him (vv. 28–30) shows how total the rejection was!

Stronstad points out that Jesus consciously models his public ministry after three OT prophets: Isaiah, Elijah, and Moses.<sup>19</sup> His charismatic and prophetic ministry will be one of consolation and teaching, of good news, and of using comparisons or parables, as did Isaiah (Luke 8:9–10; Isa. 6:10). The Elijah model becomes clear at 7:16, after the

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>16</sup> Quoted from F.F. Bruce, “The Spirit in the Apocalypse,” in *Christ and Spirit in the New Testament*, ed. by Barnabas Lindars and Stephen S. Smalley (London: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 337; quoted by Stronstad, 42.

<sup>17</sup> Stronstad, 43.

<sup>18</sup> I am indebted to my thesis advisor, Rev. David Schnasa Jacobsen, for drawing this to my attention.

<sup>19</sup> Stronstad, 43. For a good discussion of Jesus’ self-understanding as a prophet by a mainstream Protestant theologian who takes issue with much contemporary scholarship and preaching, see Chapter 5, “Jesus as a Prophet like Moses” in Paul S. Minear, *To Heal and to Reveal: The Prophetic Vocation according to Luke* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1976), 201–221.

raising of the widow's son in the town of Nain. Soon the common people are regarding Jesus as being Elijah, or one of the other prophets come back to life (9:7b–8, 19). The parallels between Jesus and Moses are noted in Deut. 18:15; Luke 9:35; Acts 3:22; 7:37.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, as Stronstad graphically shows (in a chart), there are several parallels between the charismatic prophets and Jesus—namely, they control nature, raise the dead, multiply food, and heal leprosy.<sup>21</sup>

Luke's Jesus sees himself as having been sent to preach (4:18–19; 43). Luke also shows the close link between Jesus and the Spirit. In the introduction to his hometown sermon he mentions the Spirit's being upon him. Earlier in the same chapter, Luke reports that it is the Spirit who led Jesus into the wilderness, where he was tempted by Satan (4:1). On coming out of the temptation experience, Luke declares that Jesus returns to his ministry area in Galilee "in the power of the Spirit" (4:14). For Luke it is impossible (so Stronstad) to "divorce" the mission of Jesus "from the activity of the Spirit."<sup>22</sup> But another point made by the NT writer—to his mind a "startling" one—is that Jesus rarely mentions the Holy Spirit in his teaching in Luke's Gospel.<sup>23</sup> C.K. Barrett believes it was because of Jesus' wish to keep His Messiahship secret.<sup>24</sup> Later, in Luke's second volume (Acts), there is an important reference to Jesus' being divinely anointed for his ministry task. It is a general description of the Spirit-anointed ministry of Jesus and occurs in Peter's sermon at the house of Cornelius: "The word which *God* sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ—He is Lord of all—that word you know, which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee after the baptism which John preached: *how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power*, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him (Acts 10: 36–38. Emphasis added). The beneficence mentioned here must surely include the teaching/preaching ministry of Jesus, since the preaching of the good news is emphasized in his Nazareth sermon as the primary reason for his being Spirit-anointed (Luke 4:18). Though the Spirit's *anointing* cannot be equated with the Spirit's *direction*,

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>21</sup> Stronstad, 44.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>23</sup> In his teaching Jesus calls the Holy Spirit "the good gift from the Heavenly Father" (Lu. 11:13) and implies that the Spirit is "the [authoritative] finger of God" by which he drives out demons (Lu. 11:20). Luke's Jesus again mentions the Holy Spirit in chapter twelve—this time in connection with the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (v. 10), and as the teacher "who will teach" believers what they should say when brought before the authorities (vv. 11, 12).

<sup>24</sup> C.K. Barrett, *The Holy Spirit and the Gospel Tradition*, 120; cited by Stronstad, 47.

they are nonetheless closely related: we can say that the former is given for the realization of the latter. Jesus, in unequalled fashion, fulfilled God's will in his earthly ministry. In Luke's two-volume account Jesus is clearly a Spirit-anointed, Spirit-empowered, and Spirit-directed prophetic preacher-witness.

## 5.2. The Spirit as the Power-Source for Effective Witness

The Gospel accounts, when taken together, reveal that effective communication of the Gospel necessitates a prior communication of the Spirit. Before sending his disciples out to preach repentance and forgiveness, John's resurrected Jesus breathes on his disciples and says to them: 'Receive the Holy Spirit' (Jn. 20:22b). In Luke's Gospel the necessity of the Spirit's reception is plainer still; Jesus' final word to his followers includes a pointed directive:

"Thus it is written ... that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in [Christ's] name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things. Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; *but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.*" (Lu. 24:46–49. Emphasis added.)

The prophet Joel, comments Stronstad, presents a major vision of a time when "the Spirit of prophecy will no longer be restricted" to the leaders of God's people. It will, as is noted, be "universal both in extent and status." He writes in this regard: "This future outpouring of the Spirit upon the Lord's anointed and upon His people will create a charismatic community."<sup>25</sup> One of the important parallels between the ministry of Elijah and that of Jesus is the matter of the transfer of the Spirit. The NT writer explains: "[J]ust as there was a transfer of the Spirit from Elijah to Elisha, so there will be a transfer of the Spirit from Jesus to His disciples (Acts 2:4, 33)."<sup>26</sup> Stronstad points out that the gift of the Spirit to Jesus in Luke's Gospel is "vocational" and then observes that

Luke . . . invests a paradigmatic significance to the gift of the Spirit in the inauguration narrative. That is, just as the ministry of Jesus, as the Christ, must be charismatic and inaugurated by the anointing of the Spirit, so the ministry of His disciples, heirs and successors to His own ministry, must be both charismatic (Acts 1:8), and inaugurated by the baptizing-filling of the Spirit (Acts 1:5; 2:4). In the ongoing history of salvation, at

<sup>25</sup> Stronstad, *The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke*, 26. For a statement of support for a more charismatic understanding of the Holy Spirit and of the church, cf. James D.G. Dunn, "Towards the Spirit of Christ: The Emergence of the Distinctive Features of Christian Pneumatology" in Michael Welker, ed., *The Work of the Spirit: Pneumatology and Pentecostalism* (Grand Rapids, MI/Cambridge, U.K.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2006), 23–24.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.



Pentecost the ministry of the charismatic Christ is transferred to a *necessarily charismatic* community of disciples.<sup>27</sup>

At Pentecost the “bearer of the Spirit” becomes the “giver” of the Spirit, we are told.<sup>28</sup> Through this “transfer” the apostles and the others present in the upper room “become the heirs and successors to the earthly charismatic ministry of Jesus; that is, because Jesus has poured out the charismatic Spirit upon them the disciples will *continue* to do and teach those things which Jesus *began* to do and teach (Acts 1:1).”<sup>29</sup>

The sequence of events at Jesus’ baptism and accompanying reception of the Spirit’s anointing (as C.H. Talbert shows) can be compared with the sequence reported by Luke in the Pentecost narrative. In both instances, 1) there is prayer; 2) the Spirit descends in response to the prayer; 3) there is a physical manifestation of the Spirit’s presence; and 4) the ministry is launched with preaching. Concerning the fourth parallel, it has been pointed out that the sermon in both instances “is thematic of what follows, appeals to the fulfillment of prophecy, and speaks of the rejection of Jesus.”<sup>30</sup> A key element of the content (the ‘what’) of the witness or preaching in Acts (starting with Peter’s recorded sermon) is the fact that Jesus is alive—He is no longer dead, but raised and exalted as the ‘Lord and Christ.’ The gift of the Spirit as received at Pentecost is therefore an equipping of the disciples for the task of telling people everywhere that new life in the Spirit is available to all who will respond favourably to the offer of God’s divine favour. Stronstad notes that Acts 1:8 is “more specific” than Luke 24:49 in that it gives the reason (the ‘why’) for the gift of the Spirit’s power: “it is for witness.”<sup>31</sup> Acts 1:8, a favourite text in Pentecostal preaching, reads as follows: “[Y]ou shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” This text emphasizes the reception of power—*dunamis* which will result in effective world-wide witness to Christ. The NT writer asserts:

The promise of power as a manifestation of the Spirit assures the disciples that Jesus will not abandon them to their own resources. Rather, *they will be fully equipped for their task as witnesses. Indeed, they will receive the same power by which Jesus executed His earthly ministry.* Therefore, just as the mission of Jesus had been inaugurated in the power of the

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 45–46. Italics in the text.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>29</sup> Stronstad, 49. Emphasis added.

<sup>30</sup> Charles H. Talbert, *Literary Patterns, Theological Themes and the Genre of Luke-Acts*, Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series, 20 (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1974), 16; referenced by Stronstad, 52.

<sup>31</sup> Stronstad, *The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke*, 52.

Spirit, so at Pentecost the mission of the disciples will be inaugurated in the power of the Spirit.<sup>32</sup>

### 5.3. The Apostolic Community: a Community of Spirit-directed Witnesses

Stronstad makes the important point that in interpreting the gift of the Spirit as poured out at Pentecost, Peter does not refer back to Isaiah and Ezekiel, who talk about “the inward renewal of the Spirit,” but to the prophet Joel, who foretells “the restoration of the prophetic activity of the Spirit.”<sup>33</sup> He comments further: “Peter’s use of Joel...and Luke’s parallel between the anointing of Jesus and the Spirit baptism of the disciples ... make it clear that Pentecost stands in continuity with the charismatic activity of the Spirit in Old Testament times and in the ministry of Jesus.”<sup>34</sup> As was noted earlier, the disciples in Luke’s Acts *continue* the ministry of teaching, preaching, healing and deliverance that Jesus *began* in Luke’s Gospel.

Writers have come to varying conclusions regarding the reason for the boldness and the tenacity of the witness of the earliest apostles and disciples. Consider the following question: What occurred in the life of Peter (who had publicly denied even *knowing* Jesus just prior to the Lord’s crucifixion) and in that of the rest of the Eleven to make them bold witnesses of Jesus? Some Evangelical interpreters and well-respected apologists, including Leon Morris, claim that it was the fact of having seen and spoken to the resurrected Christ. He writes: ‘We should not overlook the transformation of the disciples in all this. As noted before, they were beaten and dispirited men at the crucifixion, but they were ready to go to prison and even die for the sake of Jesus shortly afterwards.’ Morris’ explanation for the change in the disciples is quite straightforward: it was their certitude regarding Jesus’ resurrection.<sup>35</sup> Stronstad and virtually all other Pentecostals tend to disagree with the above reasoning. The former states that the sole “sufficient cause” for the “psychological transformation” of the disciples is the gift of the charismatic Spirit at Pentecost, and again on subsequent occasions (Acts 2:4; 4:8, 31).<sup>36</sup> Receiving the Spirit and the concomitant power is the requisite experience enabling and motivating bold missionary witness, regardless of negative consequences. This is the clear testimony of Luke (Acts 1:8).

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid. Emphasis added.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 56–57.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>35</sup> Leon Morris, “Resurrection,” in *The New Bible Dictionary*, organizing editor, J.D. Douglas (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1962), 1087; quoted by Stronstad, 60.

<sup>36</sup> Stronstad, 60.

Stronstad describes what occurred at Pentecost as a “pivotal event” in the continuing story of “the charismatic activity” of God’s Spirit among the people of God. With this view, one must, as he asserts, deny the validity of some “conventional interpretations of Pentecost” in which the gift of the Spirit is regarded as “the institution” of the Church and the “incorporation of the disciples into the Church.”<sup>37</sup> According to Pentecostal exegesis and understanding, the gift of the Spirit as described by Luke in the early chapters of Acts is not soteriological, that is, it does not refer to the experience of salvation; it refers, rather, to vocation and witness.<sup>38</sup>

The Samaritan narrative in Acts is one which has posed problems for noncharismatic interpreters. Though well-known and well-respected for his writings about Christ and the Spirit, James D.G. Dunn<sup>39</sup> was stymied by this narrative which presents a time lapse between peoples’ believing in Christ as Saviour (and even being baptized in His name) and receiving the Holy Spirit. Dunn resolves the enigma by charging that the Samaritans’ response and commitment to the gospel was “defective”—apparently they had not truly ‘met the conditions.’ This thinking, charges Stronstad, is a “contrived” interpretation; it “reflects” a “methodological error” and misunderstands Luke’s theology of the gift of the Spirit.<sup>40</sup> Stronstad summarizes his own view of the Samaritan narrative: “The gift of the Spirit to the believers at Samaria demonstrates that all, even a despised group like the Samaritans, are to engage in the missionary task. For this common responsibility they receive the same equipment—the vocational gift of the Spirit.”<sup>41</sup>

The charismatic, empowering Spirit is, according to Luke’s Acts, for *all* potential witnesses. It is not only for Jews—or for people with connections to the Jews, such as the Samaritans; it is available to all, as we learn in chapter ten. Stronstad writes:

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 61–62.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>39</sup> More recently James Dunn has argued for more “openness” to a charismatic understanding of the Holy Spirit. After pointing out that Christianity “began as an enthusiastic sect” he goes on to say: “This is actually good news, and not simply for Pentecostals, but for all who are concerned for the future of Christianity and its mission, all who have found worship a matter of rote repetition or have experienced theology as only for the archivist or pedant. But ecumenically, *it does mean that the traditional churches need to be more open to the still growing third or charismatic dimension of Christianity, and theologically, dogmaticians need to integrate the experienced Spirit more fully into their systems.*” Cf. James D.G. Dunn, “Towards the Spirit of Christ: The Emergence of the Distinctive Features of Christian Pneumatology” in M. Welker, ed., *The Work of the Spirit: Pneumatology and Pentecostalism* (Grand Rapids, MI/Cambridge, U.K.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2006), 23–24. Emphasis added.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, 55, 63–68; quoted and referenced by Stronstad, 64.

<sup>41</sup> Stronstad, 65.

The outpouring of the Spirit [at the home of Cornelius] teaches...a new lesson, namely, that God's impartiality applies to more than just salvation, it applies to all His gifts. The household of Cornelius receives the same prophetic gift of the Spirit which they as the uniquely chosen disciples had received on the day of Pentecost. In the second place, the outpouring of the Spirit is dramatic testimony to Cornelius and his household that God makes no distinction between himself and the Jews: that is, that they can receive the prophetic gift of the Spirit without having to convert to Judaism.<sup>42</sup>

As for the narrative describing Paul's ministry to the dozen believers at Ephesus (Acts 19:1–7), Stronstad affirms that it is similar to the Samaritan narrative. Paul's question to these Christians is "not in an initiatory or soteriological context." Paul is asking, rather, "whether they have received the prophetic gift of the Spirit." In my view both passages show evidence that there are varying stages of Christian experience: we read that the Samaritans believed the word of God spoken by Philip, and accepted Jesus as the Messiah (or Christ); some were healed and others were freed from demonic powers. They submitted to baptism and experienced joy and peace. But it was only later, when Peter and John were sent to them, that they experienced Christ as the Bestower of the Spirit with power. The incident recorded at the beginning of Acts 19 similarly shows progressive stages of spiritual experience. In this regard Stronstad states: "There is no tension between the fact of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the life of every believer and an additional experience of receiving the prophetic or charismatic gift of the Spirit."<sup>43</sup> The writer shows further that there is no basis in Acts to support the belief that the Holy Spirit is conferred through some rite of the institutional Church. He writes: "[T]he Holy Spirit is bestowed most often apart from any specific means, including the laying on of hands [although in the above passages the laying on of hands occurred]." Even prayer, says Stronstad, is "more properly the spiritual environment" in which the Spirit is bestowed, and not the "means" by which it is bestowed or received.<sup>44</sup> It is interesting to note that the various blessings of the Spirit—freedom from demonic forces, healing, peace with God, and charismatic empowerment—are typically received in the context of the *word*, and more precisely, the *preached* word.<sup>45</sup>

"In the context of the gift of the Spirit [so our NT writer-source], God acts upon the believer, and fills him [or her] with the Holy Spirit. The active voice signifies that the subject of the verb produces the action. Thus the believer must respond in order to receive

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>43</sup> Stronstad, 68.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>45</sup> The line of thinking here favours a Word ecclesiology over a predominantly ritualistic approach. For a discussion of the relationship between *Spirit* and *Word*, please see chapter one.

the Holy Spirit.” Sometimes Luke emphasizes the divine side of the experience, and at other times he shows it from the human angle. In other words, there is in this matter divine initiative and human response. Stronstad continues: “Luke makes it clear that God does not arbitrarily impose His Spirit upon the disciples apart from their response to His initiative. He also makes it clear that no one can take from God what He has not first given. In Luke’s perspective, ‘received the Holy Spirit’ is the necessary complement to being ‘filled with the Holy Spirit.’”<sup>46</sup> And the result of this infilling with the Spirit, sometimes referred to as a Spirit-baptism by Luke, is effective preaching and witness. Examples are Peter’s Pentecost sermon, after which about three thousand hearers (all with a long-established religious tradition) are moved to accept the message of the Messiahship of Jesus. Other examples of effective witness directed by the Holy Spirit include the subsequent witness and preaching of Peter (4:8–20, 31; in fulfillment of Luke 12:11–12, i.e., “The Spirit will give you the words ‘at that time.’”), the account of Stephen’s martyrdom, the story of the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch (8:26–29), and Paul and the Spirit’s guiding in missional witness (16:6–8). These examples show the crucial role of the Holy Spirit in initiating and directing the mission outreach of the church in Acts. Stronstad closes the chapter as follows: “Like John [the Baptist] and Jesus before them, the charismatic community of disciples is Spirit-empowered and Spirit-directed for its missionary task.”<sup>47</sup>

#### 5.4. Toward a Balanced Ecclesiology

In his study on the Holy Spirit Alasdair Heron remarks that mainstream theologians writing in the final decades of the twentieth century began to entertain the idea that “the pentecostal witness” might well be “a justified reminder” that the Christian life (as life in the Spirit<sup>48</sup>) “ought by its very nature to display manifest signs of its transforming and invigorating energy.”<sup>49</sup> In connection with this, Heron mentions the work of Bishop Lesslie Newbigin, who, in his work titled *The Household of God*, includes the ecclesiology of the Spirit found in Pentecostal circles, along with the *sacramental* ecclesiology of Roman

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<sup>46</sup> Stronstad, 71.

<sup>47</sup> Stronstad, 73.

<sup>48</sup> In this respect James Dunn writes: “[E]xperiences of God’s Spirit...have a powerfully generative and attractive effect and... may be the key to Christianity’s growth in the wider world and essential for its revitalization in the West. A church that seeks to restrict and control the Spirit, as too dangerous and unpredictable, may be safe, but it has signed its own death warrant. A church that seeks to follow where the Spirit leads will have to expect the unexpected and be prepared to be shaken to its core. But that’s life, the life of the Spirit” – Cf. Dunn, “Towards the Spirit of Christ” in Welker’s edition, 25–26.

<sup>49</sup> Alasdair I.C. Heron, *The Holy Spirit* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1983), 131.

Catholicism and the ecclesiology of the *Word* that is emphasized in mainstream Protestantism—in order to present a full-orbed and more balanced ecclesiology.<sup>50</sup> In view of the fact that it is the Spirit who can give us the power necessary for effective witness, it is important for all of us to reflect on the beginnings of our Christian story in Acts, and open our hearts to the challenge regarding the availability of the Spirit for witness found in Luke's writings. The entire church will benefit greatly from an ecclesiology of the Spirit: and that includes upwardly-mobile North American Pentecostals too.

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<sup>50</sup> L. Newbigin, *The Household of God* (London, S.C.M., 1953, 1964); discussed by Heron, 131–32.

## CHAPTER SIX

### A PROPOSAL FOR THE ENHANCEMENT OF PREACHING

The most effective way to learn a language is to be immersed in a culture where it is constantly spoken. Similarly, the most effective way to preach Christ is by being immersed in the Spirit sent by Christ. Christian preachers are called to deal in the spiritual realities that are Christ and his gospel of the kingdom. These spiritual realities are best communicated in the power of the Holy Spirit. This follows from the connection that Jesus himself made between pending world-wide witness to him and the ‘dunamis’ of the Spirit (Acts 1:8). In view of the concluding remarks of the preceding chapter, it is relevant to note that groups which have emphasized an ecclesiology of the Spirit have also stressed the link between Spirit baptism and witness, especially the verbal dimension of missions and evangelization.

Pentecostal theologian Frank D. Macchia states that whereas “Word” ecclesiologies...tend to see Spirit baptism as regeneration by faith in Christ through the proclamation of the gospel” and whereas “[s]acramental ecclesiologies...identify Spirit baptism with water baptism or the sacraments of initiation,” Holiness and Pentecostal groups “...see Spirit baptism as that which revives or renews the people of God for its prophetic tasks in the world.”<sup>1</sup> While conceding that there is some “overlap” in these ecclesiologies of Spirit baptism, Macchia argues that the metaphor itself should be considered first in its own right (not as “an ecclesial dynamic”)—in order to define the metaphor initially “as related to the kingdom of God” (before making ecclesial applications). After all, the witness who first introduced the Spirit-baptism metaphor (namely, John the Baptist) preached, “Repent, for the kingdom of God is near” (Matt. 3:1–2). The Baptist’s preaching was evidently neither Temple-centred nor synagogue-centred: it was kingdom-focussed. As such, John’s ministry emphasis and approach can encourage us to appreciate both an expansion of the locus for preaching, and the pin-pointing of its source and motivation.

#### **6.1. The Dynamic of Spirit-directed Witness**

Macchia notes that John uses ‘prophetic rhetoric’ to say (in effect): “I can baptize in water unto repentance, but the Messiah will baptize in the Spirit unto judgment and purga-

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<sup>1</sup> Frank D. Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit: A Global Pentecostal Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 123. The present study supports this view of an ecclesiology of the Spirit, and of Spirit-baptism.

tion/restoration. John's baptism was 'preparatory'... [b]ut 'apocalyptic transcendence' belongs to the [Spirit-anointed] Messiah alone. Only from him will the wind of the Spirit blow away the chaff and store the wheat into barns."<sup>2</sup> The writer notes in an earlier section that Korean theologian Youngmo Cho "... maintains that Luke only relates the inauguration of the kingdom of God indirectly to Spirit baptism. Spirit baptism for Luke does not inaugurate the kingdom of God but is rather the 'power to proclaim the Kingdom.'"<sup>3</sup> It becomes clear, when reading the early part of Acts that Luke *does* make a link between the Spirit's filling and resulting bold proclamation of the gospel. Admitting their need for boldness, the apostles specifically request it in their prayer (Acts 4:29, NIV); and a couple of verses later, we read: "After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all *filled with the Holy Spirit* and *spoke the word of God boldly*" (v. 31; emphasis added).

The disciples, as presented in Acts, are not only strong and effective witnesses because they have 'been with' Jesus (as even their opponents note, 4:13b)—although this fact is an important basis of their witness (John 15:27)—but the effectiveness of their witness is enhanced by the fact that they have the Spirit of Christ in them and upon them. Peter sees and describes himself and his immediate community as being 'witnesses' (Acts 3:15). In the sermon reported in chapter three, Peter emphasizes the fulfillment of OT prophecy and the fact that Jesus is the suffering Messiah-prophet, sent for the remission of sins and for times of refreshing and blessing. Again, the importance of repentance is emphasized in this post-Pentecost Petrine sermon. The guilt of the hearers is established by Peter in this extemporaneous address, charging that the Jewish leaders killed an innocent and holy person, Jesus (whom he presents as the Son of God) and preferred to release a murderer (Barabbas). This must be regarded as bold witness, especially from someone who some weeks before denied knowing Jesus because of the fear of the power of these very authorities! How has this become possible? To say it is due to a belief in the resurrection is not sufficient; to say it is because of having spoken with the resurrected Christ is insufficient. This bold witness is a result of nothing else and nothing less than the power of the Holy Spirit (1:8), which was deemed essential by Christ (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4). In the

<sup>2</sup> Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit*, 124.

<sup>3</sup> Youngmo Cho, "Spirit and Kingdom in Luke-Acts: Proclamation as the Primary Role of the Spirit in Relation to the Kingdom of God in Luke-Acts," *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 6:2 (July 2003): 197; referenced by Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit*, 58, n.97.



presence of the power (*exousia*) of the Jewish authorities, Peter now witnesses in the power (*dunamis*) of the Holy Spirit.<sup>4</sup> The fear of man (which so often can hinder the very actualization of witness, cf. Acts 18:9, 10) has been displaced by the power of God's Spirit.

Repeatedly Luke shows the Spirit's witnessing activity in concert with that of the apostles and others, including instances in which they are, in prophetic fashion, communicating unpopular themes, such as the guilt of their hearers. In answer to the authorities' prohibition of their preaching, the apostles reply: "We must obey God rather than men!" They boldly reiterate the guilt of their hearers and give a synopsis of the Good News of forgiveness through the now-exalted Christ; then they add: "We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him" (5:32). Though later flogged and forbidden to speak as witnesses to Jesus, they disobey the human order to fulfill their divine mandate: they keep on preaching the Messiahship of Jesus, as verse 42 puts it, "day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house." Luke's explanation for the tenacious dynamism of these early Christian witnesses is the 'dunamis' of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8). Not only do the apostles witness to or about Christ objectively; they witness *in* Christ and *like* Christ.

To twenty-first-century readers of Acts who may argue for a more docile approach to witness and preaching, Macchia maintains that

the [contemporary] Christian should remain open to an experience of the presence and power of the Spirit that transcends cultural expectations, including those of post-Enlightenment rationalism in the West. Luke's voice in the canon calls all Christians to an experience of Pentecost that is akin to a prophetic call felt deeply like Jeremiah's experience of fire in his bones.<sup>5</sup>

The dynamic of the Spirit's flow and direction also promotes reconciliation—both in the church and in the world at large. Macchia comments as follows: "There is a relational dynamic at play in Spirit baptism: *God pours God's presence into us in order to receive it back along with the fullness of our renewed spirits in flaming tongues of praise and witness* (Acts 2:4). We are then to pour ourselves into one another: 'speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.'"<sup>6</sup> But Spirit-baptized witnesses will have an outward-looking focus as well: they will be motivated to emulate their Lord, the evange-

<sup>4</sup> Readiness to testify about Christ involves an experience of the power of God—evidenced by a freedom from fear and shame; and a readiness to suffer, should the opposition become hostile (2 Tim. 1:8). These are the very characteristics exhibited by Peter in his early preaching witness (Acts 2, 3 and 4). What the KJV translators render as 'boldness' the translators of later versions sometimes render as 'fearlessness' (compare, for example, Eph. 6:19, NIV).

<sup>5</sup> Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit*, 150.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 159. Italics in text.

lizing Spirit-directed witness *par excellence*. Macchia writes: “The Spirit-baptized church mimics the Spirit-baptizing God. Jesus came on behalf of the Father to seek and to save the lost (Luke 15). Jesus bestows the Spirit so that we might in witness to Jesus seek the lost as well.”<sup>7</sup> Spirit bestowal and baptism thus make possible the multiplication of Christ’s ministry of bold truth-witness in the world.

As has been mentioned, for Luke it is the infilling of the Holy Spirit which results in bold proclamation by all who are thus filled (Acts 4:31). Although the original college of apostles were the leaders, who (as Macchia puts it) “served on the vanguard” of the nascent church, they were—under the Spirit’s direction—working amidst “spiritually gifted congregations that served with them to proclaim God’s Word in power with signs following. The entire church—indeed, all flesh, including those gifted to be apostles—are part of the Spirit-baptized church as a prophetic community (2:17–18). All are ministers of the word in the power of the Spirit.”<sup>8</sup> In the view of the most prolific of apostolic writers (Paul) it is the hope of the gospel, the covenant that has lasting glory, which also imparts a strong measure of boldness (2 Cor. 3:12).

## 6.2. The Authority and Effect of Spirit-directed Witness

When Jesus sent his followers to preach the kingdom during his earthly ministry, he delegated his authority to them. They exercised that authority to announce the kingdom, to heal the sick and to cast out demons. Both in the Gospels and Acts we have numerous examples of the disciples of Jesus engaged in a ministry similar to that of their master. Just as signs and miracles attended his preaching ministry, so also did they accompany that of the apostles and other believers as they began to carry out Christ’s mandate. In comparing the conclusions of the Synoptic writers, one notes varying emphases: Luke, with whom we have concerned ourselves most, stresses that the Lord blessed his followers (but does not elaborate on the content of that blessing); the added conclusion in Mark emphasizes signs and wonders as divine confirmation of the preached word; in Matthew, the emphasis is on the all-encompassing *authority* of Christ’s mandate—his final words to his disciples read as follows: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations (*ethné*), baptizing them..., and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the

<sup>7</sup> Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit*, 160.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 236.

age” (Matt. 28:18–20). The wording of this ‘commission’ (as it is often called) is phrased to convey that the authority of Jesus is abiding and universal; and it implies that it will have effect among people of all languages and cultures.

The authority of God’s representatives in both the Old and the New Testaments is a mediated or delegated authority. As royal heralds, they communicate the message that has been entrusted to them by the higher authority. As prophetic witnesses, they report what they have seen and heard—and what has been revealed to them. Neither innate nor humanly acquired, the authority of God’s preachers—like most other spiritual blessings—is divinely-communicated through the Spirit. When describing the “transfer” (in the OT) of the Spirit from an older leader to a successor (as in the cases of Moses/Joshua, or Saul/David), there is, as Roger Stronstad<sup>9</sup> points out, a double purpose: 1) “to authenticate or accredit” the new leader, and 2) “to endow the appropriate skills for the new leadership responsibilities.” In the biblical passage the divine purpose includes a transfer of ‘authority’ and expected cooperation and collaboration with the new leader (cf. Num. 27:18–20).

What can be said about the authority of our testimony as ministers of the new covenant, as witnesses to Christ and his gospel? In Paul Ricoeur’s view<sup>10</sup>, authority is 1) connected with the engagement of the witness; 2) invested with the one sent by God to preach the divine vision; and 3) placed with one who patterns one’s life after Christ’s suffering.<sup>11</sup> Even a cursory reading of the early portion of Acts will reveal that the initial nucleus of apostles and believers exemplified these realities: they were whole-hearted and single-minded in their engagement; they knew themselves to be commissioned and sent by Christ; and they were willing (even happy) to suffer for the gospel and the name of Jesus, their Lord (Acts 5:41). A wise Jewish leader warned the crowd that if the purpose and activity of the apostles (basically their verbal witness to Jesus as the Christ) was “from God,” then their proclamatory witness was unstoppable (v. 39).

Older preaching witnesses often have a stronger sense of authority than novices. Hence, they can be a source of encouragement for the latter. This is the case between Paul<sup>12</sup> and his “son in the faith,” Timothy, whom he exhorts “to fan into flame the gift of God,

<sup>9</sup> R. Stronstad, *The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke*, 20.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. the beginning of chapter three above, 27ff.

<sup>11</sup> Listed by Anna Carter Florence, *Preaching as Testimony*, 112.

<sup>12</sup> If Barrett’s hypothesis of ‘genuine Pauline fragments’ is correct, this strikes me as being one of them. Cf. C.K. Barrett, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 10. But the general consensus among mainstream Protestant scholars is that in the Pastoral Epistles (and in some other materials bearing Paul’s name) we actually have a reworking of the material—hence they are often described as ‘deutero-Pauline.’

which is in [him]”—since “God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline” (2 Tim. 1:6–7, NIV). This implies that our sense of authority can grow and develop. It can be better exercised when we are conscious of our authoritative position. It deepens, too, homiletician Anna Carter Florence<sup>13</sup> explains, as we engage with the truth and power of the gospel at deeper levels. She writes:

*Semantically*, we understand that testimony makes its way in a world of conflicting opinions, and that it is incumbent upon us as witnesses to be more engaged and convincing than other witnesses if we want to be judged truthful. *Prophetically*, we understand that our engagement as a witness grows stronger when we believe ourselves to be testifying on God’s behalf and at God’s initiative, and when we can communicate both the radical, global message from God as well as our faith in that message. *Evangelically*, we understand that our engagement as a witness is most profound when it is patterned after the life and passion of Jesus Christ, even to the death. With each layer, the authority of the one who testifies gains strength and power, according to [one’s] engagement with the power of Christ.<sup>14</sup>

What becomes clear, then, is that the authority of our witness or message is from God, and not from ourselves. Our authority derives from the authority and power of our message, and from the Lord who commissions us to communicate it. Jesus, in John’s Gospel, makes it plain that apart from him his disciples can do nothing to bear fruit that will identify them as part of God’s vineyard (15:5c). Paul too emphasizes that ministerial competency and authority come from God (2 Cor. 3:5–6; 10:8)—and he emphasizes that this occurs in the economy of the life-giving Spirit, through the power of the Spirit, as the Lord (who is here identified with the Spirit) progressively liberates and transforms us (2 Cor. 3:18).

### **6.3. The Holy Spirit as Author (and Authority) in Preaching**

In John’s Gospel Jesus presents the promised Holy Spirit as “another Counsellor” like himself, who will “teach” the disciples what is needful and “remind” them of all that Jesus has taught them (14:16, 26). This “Counsellor” will be in them, evidently enabling the ongoing presence of Jesus in their lives. They will continue to experience the help, care and guidance that they have received until now through the physical presence and direction of Jesus. They will not be left as orphans (14:18). In large part because of the presence and ministry of this promised Helper, they will experience a supernatural peace (14:27)—even in spite of adverse circumstances and severe opposition, including persecution (15:18, 20).

In an earlier chapter we mentioned the presentation made by Riverside Pastor James Forbes, who describes the Spirit as an “education director” and a “tour guide.” He mentions

<sup>13</sup> Cf. the beginning of chapter three (above).

<sup>14</sup> Anna Carter Florence, *Preaching as Testimony*, 113.

the peace of mind gained by preachers when they welcome the co-operation of the Spirit in their sermon preparation and preaching. Because of the “collaboration” of the Holy Spirit, he says, “[m]uch of the anxiety and dread associated with the preparation process is removed....”<sup>15</sup> If we consider that God has a stake in our effectively communicating the gospel, and remember that the Spirit has been sent as the best of God’s “good gifts” (Luke 11:13, with Matt. 7:11), we may grasp that the Spirit is consistently more eager to help us in the task of bearing witness to the truth of the gospel than we are to appropriate the help. We can rest assured that we are not alone; the Spirit is (as Forbes puts it) with us “in the process;” the Spirit, in a sense, “*is the preacher.*” All of our concerns about what and how to present God’s word, says the pastor, “are moderated by our tag-team relationship with the Spirit.”<sup>16</sup> In other words, the Holy Spirit helps to lighten the burden of preaching.

Another witness to the peace achieved by seeing oneself as being in the employ of God’s Spirit is Gardner Taylor, also from the Black tradition and also serving a congregation in a sector of New York City. The elderly Taylor proposes that preachers should see themselves as “ambassadors of another kingdom.” He comments: “I think preachers, particularly young preachers, have to, without gaining too much self-importance from it, need to have a sense that they are ambassadors from another world.” This self-understanding helped Taylor, long-time pastor at Concord Church in Harlem, to “settle” his nerves.<sup>17</sup> Though he does not name the Spirit directly, he nonetheless hints at it with the phrases “another kingdom” and “another world.” Since the present material world is not in view, he must be talking about the domain of the Spirit.<sup>18</sup>

He also alludes to the Spirit as the Author and Inspirer of creative and effective preaching. At one point in the interview homiletician Larue asks Taylor if following his routine (going into his study at specified times and spending regular time-periods there) “guarantees” that he will be able to put together a creative and effective sermon. He asks expressly: “Does that process guarantee that your creative juices will flow?” And Taylor replies: “No. But even in the doing of that one must remember that creativity is not systematic. You cannot dictate to it. You cannot subject creativity to a sundial or a clock.

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<sup>15</sup> James A. Forbes, Jr., *The Holy Spirit and Preaching*, 80.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Gardner C. Taylor, “A Holy Pursuit,” in Cleophus J. Larue, ed., *Power in the Pulpit: How America’s Most Effective Black Preachers Prepare Their Sermons* (Louisville, London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 153.

<sup>18</sup> Macchia, in his book *Baptized in the Spirit* (p. 89), mentions that Gregory of Nyssa, one of the Cappadocian fathers, identifies (and virtually equates) the Spirit with the kingdom of God!

*The wind blows where it will.* But it is your responsibility to place yourself in a position to evoke the creative process.”<sup>19</sup> This is clearly an allusion to the work of the Holy Spirit in sermon preparation. We are responsible, implies the veteran pastor, to make ourselves available to the Spirit’s inspiration, direction, and guidance. Moreover, the same Spirit who helps in the preparation is also eager to help *during the delivery* of the message. Taylor comments: “[In the course of preaching] I would lose a lot of material which I thought was wonderful but perhaps it wasn’t. Maybe it needed to be lost. *But I also picked up material that I had no notion about when I was preparing the sermon. This new material would come in the actual preaching of the sermon.*”<sup>20</sup> Another proponent of trusting in the Spirit’s direction in the preaching moment testifies as follows: “[The process of remaining flexible and fluid, and leaving room for the Spirit to speak] has proven to be most rewarding and beneficial to the hearers. I have to admit that some of the most memorable and often quoted phrases by congregants were those ‘injected by the Spirit’ and not from the prepared notes.”<sup>21</sup>

It is not illogical to reason that if we are faithful to the message and spirit of the scripture in the preaching ministry we may consider the Holy Spirit to be its author (or ‘auctor,’ as some writers of earlier centuries<sup>22</sup> termed it). By the term ‘auctor’ they were referring to their authoritative source. It is well to reiterate that when God’s people—and especially those called to preach—“live and act *as authoritative witnesses*, they (as Walter Brueggemann puts it) *encounter and experience God as their Partner*. And this partnership elicits and even “compels” witness.”<sup>23</sup>

In Acts Peter and John, newly Spirit-filled apostles and witnesses, proclaim to the human authorities who oppose their preaching: “Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God’s sight to obey you rather than God. For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard” (4:19, 20). They see themselves as bearing witness in concert with the primary witness, the Holy Spirit. This becomes clear when Peter and the others declare: “We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him” (5:32). In effect, they are saying, “We are telling the truth about Christ, as his witnesses. Concurrently the Spirit (who is the Spirit of truth which we have received

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 151. Emphasis added.

<sup>20</sup> Taylor, “A Holy Pursuit,” in Larue, ed., *Power in the Pulpit*, 153. Emphasis added.

<sup>21</sup> Joe Samuel Ratliff, “The Gloom, Glamour, and Glory of Preaching” in Larue, ed., *Power in the Pulpit*, 110.

<sup>22</sup> Geoffrey Chaucer, among others.

<sup>23</sup> Brueggemann’s thought is thus communicated by Florence, in her *Preaching as Testimony*, 136.

from Jesus, the Christ), is speaking, in agreement with us—even from *within* us. We are speaking by the Spirit, and the Spirit is speaking through us.” This is in keeping with what Jesus had taught them (Matt. 10:20). It is also in keeping with the experience of the prophet Jeremiah, who saw himself as bearing the name of the Lord God, and who, when the words of the Lord came to him, ate them and found them to be a source of joy and delight, and to whom God then spoke as follows: “If you utter what is precious ... you shall be as my mouth (Jer. 15:16, 19b). When Jeremiah spoke to the people of his time in keeping with God’s mandate and message, it amounted to God speaking. When Peter and Stephen and their fellow witnesses communicated the truth of the gospel in the first century, they were acting as Christ’s ambassadors, spokespersons of the Spirit. When Christian preachers proclaim the truths of the gospel in our day, with the Spirit’s anointing, they can be confident that the Spirit will speak through them. And God’s word to the people, though spoken through imperfect witnesses, and spoken to indifferent or even hostile hearers, will not ‘return void’—rather, it will achieve God’s purpose (Isaiah 55:11).

#### **6.4. The Holy Spirit as Witnessing Director through Prayer**

How does witness become Spirit-directed? How does one’s preaching ministry become effective? The key is reliance on the Spirit through persistent prayer. This sounds trite, but the Spirit works through preachers who pray and helps them in it. All too often prayer is a chore toward which we have an undeniable antipathy. Yet the act of praying is strong evidence that one is enlisting divine help. In Ephesians Paul<sup>24</sup> connects the Spirit both with the word of God and with persistent prayer—engaging these, intimates the apostle, will result in bold utterance (6:17–20). Prayer properly precedes bold proclamation in that it releases the Spirit to work in us and through us (Acts 4:31). Prayer, then, will be a priority for those who desire to preach with the Spirit’s unction and direction.

Pastor David Yongghi Cho<sup>25</sup> of Seoul, South Korea, claims to have developed a life of prayer. Growing up in a culture where people are typically more conscious of spiritual

<sup>24</sup> J.D.G. Dunn considers the pneumatology of Ephesians “one of the strong arguments for [its] authenticity.” Cf. Gordon D. Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul*. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 660, fn. 8. Again, we note that both Dunn and Fee here oppose the view taken by the majority of Protestant NT scholars, namely, that Ephesians and some other purportedly ‘Pauline’ letters are in fact ‘deutero-Pauline.’ Following a long-held belief, the present study assumes and supports authenticity.

<sup>25</sup> Cho, David Yongghi, “Christ’s Vision for Your/My Ministry.” Lecture given at the Thursday General Session during the 1995 *Robert H. Schuller Institute for Successful Church Leadership*, held January 30–February 3, 1995, at the Crystal Cathedral, Garden Grove, CA. Video Copyright 1995, Crystal Cathedral Ministries.

forces than in the west, he speaks of prayer as “spiritual wrestling, which, among other things, is engaged in to “take ground from the ‘Power of the air.’” The pastor then recounts one such power encounter with the “heathen” priest of a particular region where Cho and his team wanted to construct a Christian church building. The ‘contest’ involved a woman who had suffered from paralysis for seven years; she was the wife of an alcoholic farmer. The priest said, ‘If you can heal that woman within the month we will allow you to stay and build a church here; if not, you must leave our territory.’ Cho accepted the challenge and began to pray “like a dying person.” (Others in the group joined him in prayer and fasting). Despite the visits of the Christians, their witness and their practical help to the family, nothing seemed to be bringing change. We use a format-change to highlight the outcome.

*On the next-to-last day of the agreed-upon month, Cho fell asleep and had a dream-vision, in which he was wrestling a dangerous serpent. At the worst point of the struggle Cho was unable to call on the name of Jesus. He was somehow mute. Then, at the end of the dream, he was finally enabled to repeat the name ‘Jesus.’ Subsequently he was able to defeat the snake, stomping on its head.... Very early the next morning, at a special group prayer meeting, a member of Cho’s team ran up to say: ‘People are coming this way. I think they are coming to stop our meeting.’ It turned out to be the woman who had been paralyzed. She was saved, delivered from a demonic power, and filled with the Holy Spirit. She was leading a crowd toward the group of Christians and wanted to join them. Fasting and prayer had prevailed. People burned the heathen temple of the area to the ground. There is now a “Memorial Church” there with a seating capacity of 5,000.*

Prayer, says Pastor Cho, is “the foundation of revival” and “opens” the sky (or heaven). In other words, it is a manoeuvre (to retain the language of wrestling) that brings the power of the Spirit to bear on a spiritual dilemma. At the end of the 70s, sensing the Spirit’s guidance to do so, Cho began to evangelize in Japan. In his lecture he recounts the problems he and his team faced. (For instance, Japan has eight million gods).

*When the Koreans wanted to introduce the populace to Jesus Christ, the Japanese typically replied, ‘Jesus? That’s a western god—we don’t need a western god.’ But Cho and his team persevered, and they won a few people to Christ. Still, it was a very slow, painful process. One day they came up with a new plan: they decided to take groups of Japanese people over to South Korea, and hold evangelistic meetings with them there. The results were amazing: people were easily persuaded and many were converted. Cho asked*



*them, 'Why are you now accepting my message, when before you were so reluctant and closed? After all, I'm the same preacher wherever I travel; and I preach similar messages.' To this the Japanese replied, 'Back in Japan we couldn't understand your message. We were confused. Here in South Korea, we suddenly understood.'*

Cho's explanation for this follows: "Prayer," he claims, "involves binding the power of the devil—the Power of the air." Thus, prayer has become their 'top priority.' The Spirit has shown Korean Christians that prayer makes the difference. Pastor Cho is convinced that protracted, prevailing prayer is the foundation and key to effective evangelism and revival. In response to the earnest intercession of God's people, the Spirit brings life and light where death and darkness has reigned. *The Spirit uses us in prayer to make way for the Word.* Prayer is the vanguard tactic for Spirit-directed witness.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### CONCLUSION: CLOSING REFLECTIONS

#### Introduction

Unlike much contemporary preaching in the anglophone regions of the Occident, the inspiring hymn *Ein' feste Burg* (translated into English as *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God*) does not down-play the reality of spiritual evil. Frederick Hedge's fine translation does justice to the original<sup>1</sup>—particularly in its use of military<sup>2</sup> vocabulary. Anglophone Protestants will no doubt be very familiar with the terms used in the English translation: nouns like 'fortress,' 'foe,' 'bulwark,' 'strength,' 'triumph,' 'kingdom' and 'battle;' and verbal forms such as 'kill,' 'armed,' 'striving' and 'prevailing.'

The NT, especially the material bearing Paul's name, also makes frequent use of military terminology. Paul<sup>3</sup> and the writer of the letter to the early Hebrew Christians use the word 'sword' as a metaphor for both the Word and the Spirit (Eph. 6:17b; Heb. 4:12). In Ephesians 6:18 the tactic of prayer is referenced in tandem with the items of armour mentioned in Ephesians 6:14–17a, and with the reference to the 'weapons' of Word and Spirit in verse 17b. We should distinguish 'armour' from 'weapons': the former is meant to protect us against the onslaught of the enemy; the latter are designed to engage the enemy. I have referred to prayer as a tactic,<sup>4</sup> but the term 'strategy' or 'stratagem' might be better still. We have seen how prayer can prepare preachers for bold proclamation and witness—both in the nascent church (cf. Acts 4:31) and in twentieth-century evangelization in South Korea and Japan. In Ephesians, Paul writes (in the context of his military analogy):

*And pray in the Spirit on all occasions.... Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should (6:18–20, NIV; emphasis added).*

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<sup>1</sup> Hedge's reference (in the final verse) to the Word and the Spirit (our general theme, and more especially in chapter one) is faithful to Luther's original.

<sup>2</sup> We choose the word 'military' advisedly—rather than the terms 'militant' or 'militaristic.' (Psalm 46, which serves as a basis for the hymn, also contains military language). The opening verse of the German original has terms such as 'Wehr' ('defense'), 'Waffen' ('weaponry'), 'Feind' ('enemy') 'Macht' ('might') and 'Rüstung' ('armour'); the second has the verb 'streiten' ('to fight') and the word 'Feld' (here 'battlefield' or 'territory'); the third verse, containing the verb 'fällen,' conveys the idea of 'felling' the enemy; and the final verse has 'Gewinn' and 'Reich' (which here mean, respectively, 'gaining victory' and 'kingdom').

<sup>3</sup> In assuming the Pauline authorship of Ephesians we are diverging from the mainstream Protestant view, which teaches that the letter is most likely 'deutero-Pauline.' Our view here thus represents a minority.

<sup>4</sup> See the concluding section of the previous chapter.

The apostle here implies that prayer “in the Spirit” enables bold Spirit-directed preaching-witness. He asks that believers pray specifically that *words be given* to him. Repeatedly in the NT documents (and in more recent church history as well) we note the causative link between Spirit-directed praying and bold, effective preaching.

In serving as witnesses to the truth of the gospel, preachers are in a battle which is just as real as a flesh-and-blood battle. It is a combat with *spiritual* forces (as referred to in Eph. 6:11–12 and in the Reformation battle-hymn referred to above). Preaching the gospel is difficult. Bearing witnessing to Christ is difficult: Jesus’ words in Mark 14 reveal his awareness of Peter’s weakness and pending denial (vv. 29–31). Praying is difficult: Jesus’ closest disciples find this out in the garden of Gethsemane (vv. 37–38). The spiritual work of prayer is hard for weak human would-be witnesses. Though (as Mark’s gospel tells it) Jesus is disappointed that his inner circle of followers has fallen asleep instead of ‘watching and praying,’ he understands their nature to be inadequate for the task; and he comments tellingly: ‘The spirit is willing, but the body (Gr. *sarx*) is weak’ (v. 38b, NIV). However, with the help of the Spirit we can become effective in prayer and in proclamatory witness. Spirit-directed witness naturally results from Spirit-aided prayer. It seems to be a law of God’s kingdom—a natural principle of the supernatural realm. The very disciples who are so weak and ineffective in the garden later give evidence of boldness and courage—once they have been empowered by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is God’s means and method to connect weak human ‘branches’ to the strong divine ‘Vine’ (John 15:1–5) in order to effect growth in the kingdom. Prayer, an all-important link between Christ and his witnesses, is made effective through the Spirit’s help (Rom. 8: 26–27)—and it can result in a reception<sup>5</sup> of power leading (quite ‘naturally’ then) to Spirit-directed witness (Acts 1:8).

### 7.1. The Apparent Preferences of the Spirit’s Witnessing

It should not be surprising that the Spirit of God has certain desires and preferences concerning our witness and testimony regarding Jesus. James 4 focuses on the sin of pride

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<sup>5</sup> The S/spirit whom Christians receive is called by Paul ‘the Spirit of adoption’—in other words, the Spirit enables us to relate to God as a child relates to its parents. Indeed, our relating to God in this way is one sign (though not an infallible one) of the Spirit’s presence in our consciousness. We do not relate to God primarily via a code of law, as billions of the world’s religious people do, but via the Spirit of God given to us in connection with the preaching of the Good-News-Word, or the gospel-faith (Galatians 3:5). One of the ultimate reasons for the incarnation of Christ is to make possible the bestowal and effusion of this H/holy S/spirit. It makes sense that the Giver (the Bestower and Baptizer) of the Spirit should be Jesus the Christ, for he it is who ‘speaks the words of God,’ and who has received the Spirit without measure or limit (John 3:34).

and the importance of humility. One possible translation of verse five reads as follows: “Or do you think Scripture says without reason that *the spirit he caused to live in us longs jealously . . . ?*” The Spirit wants to produce love for God in our heart—apparently, at least in part, to displace the love we have for the world and the things of the world.<sup>6</sup> The Spirit, then, desires to aid us in submitting to the will of God, especially to fill our heart with love for God and neighbour—so that our witness will be in harmony with what Jesus called the greatest commandments, and in harmony too with the example of Christ himself.

### 7.1.1. The Preferred Dispositions of the Spirit’s Witnessing

Throughout the Scriptures God is revealed as One who draws near to those who are humble-minded. Isaiah represents God thus: “I live in a high and holy place, *but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit . . .*” (57:15b; emphasis added). In chapter four of his letter, James quotes a relevant proverb: ‘God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble’ (v. 6).<sup>7</sup> A few verses later he writes: “Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up” (v. 10). The opposite of this principle—of lapsing in our witness through pride—also holds true; we have an example in the overly self-confident comments by Peter in Mark 14:29 and 31: “Even if all fall away, I will not;” and “Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you.” Once conscious of his weakness, and of his need for Jesus’ intervention and reintegration, however, Peter becomes a candidate for witness in the power of the Spirit. The Spirit, then, avoids the proud, and gravitates toward the humble.

Whereas a majority of the Israelite spies sent to investigate Canaan expressed doubt in God’s care and power, thus showing contempt, Caleb gave a good witness—one in keeping with the will and mind of God. As a result, the ten unfaithful spies (and the people of their generation who believed their ‘evil report’) were judged. But Caleb, who had expressed faith in God’s ability to give Israel victory in their conquest of the land, received honour from the Lord: “But because my servant Caleb has a different spirit and follows me wholeheartedly, I will bring him into the land he went to, and his descendants will inherit it” (Num. 14:24). Sadly, for the majority in his day, Caleb’s testimony was incredible; but it was in accord with God’s, and God honoured him for it. The Spirit-directed prophetic witness will speak in harmony with what God has spoken, even though it may be risky: in the OT account, the crowd considered stoning the four principal leaders (including Caleb).

<sup>6</sup> 1 John 2:15–17. Notice the references here to *desire* (cravings, lust, desires) and also to ‘prideful’ boasting.

<sup>7</sup> Prov. 3:34.

In addition to honouring the humble, the Spirit witnesses in solidarity with the faithful and obedient. An extra-biblical example is the preaching ministry of Jarena Lee.

### 7.1.2. The Preferred Positions (loci) of the Spirit's Witnessing

God's Spirit, characterized by love and compassion, *gravitates toward places of human need*. In response to my request, a pastor-friend sent me a typed paper recounting some of his experiences in Spirit-directed witness that illustrate the above point. The three vignettes here described by my friend show that the Holy Spirit is not confined to working through preachers while they are speaking in the pulpit—the Spirit is present and active in hospitals, in homes, and even on the highway. My friend writes:

1. Because of my ostomy I am a registered ostomy visitor. This means that I visit patients who are facing (or who have just had) this type of surgery, showing them the appliances and demonstrating their use. Many have trauma, thinking their lives are over. As they listen to me, they realize life can go on with minor changes. As the Holy Spirit directs, I am able to present the gospel to some of them: three of these patients have become Christians.
2. I was contacted by a lady who was in immediate need for \$100 to avoid disconnection of her hydro power; I told her not to worry—I would get the money. On my way to my bank, I was stopped by a woman who said, 'The Holy Spirit told me you would know someone who needs this,' and she placed a \$100-bill in my hand.
3. While leaving Sarnia for Toronto I sensed the Spirit's prompting to pick up a young hitch-hiker (something I rarely ever do because of my medical condition). As we drove we talked and I found out he was a 15-year-old runaway from Port Elgin. Half way to Toronto we stopped at a truck stop, where I bought him lunch. We spoke about the gospel of Jesus Christ and the owner, who is a Christian friend, let us use his office to pray. There the young man accepted Christ as his personal Saviour and Lord. In Toronto I was able to secure a bus ticket and overnight care for him at the Salvation Army . . . . He was soon reunited with his family.<sup>8</sup>

As we make ourselves available to the Holy Spirit in this way, we can all be guided in our witness to Jesus Christ. My friend makes no claims to special charisms—other than the Holy Spirit. He does not preach to a congregation of 75,000 each Sunday like Rev. Cho of Seoul, South Korea (who has referred to the Holy Spirit as his 'Senior Partner'), but my friend has experienced the guidance and direction of the same partnering Spirit.

The Spirit prefers to visit places where there is spiritual hunger. Many preachers in mainstream Protestantism in the middle of the twentieth century expressed dissatisfaction regarding their ministry and openly admitted their need for a deeper experience of the Spirit's power: this was the context for the unique ministry of David du Plessis, who was

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<sup>8</sup> From a friend's unpublished testimony reflecting on the place of the Spirit in life and in preaching ministry.

instrumental in leading many noncharismatic church leaders into a deeper experience of the Spirit, namely that of charismatic empowerment. Doubtless inspired by the phrasing used in Acts 11:12, du Plessis called his book *The Spirit Bade Me Go*. Just as the meeting of Peter and Cornelius brought greater harmony between people-groups in the first century, so the story of du Plessis is illustrative of a fostering of unity and bridge-building among various ecclesial traditions. Yet the fostering of unity (which, surely, is dear to the heart of God) was not du Plessis' initial or basic motive. He only intended to witness to the reality and power of the Spirit among Christians (as he saw the matter) in whose churches the work of the Spirit had been neglected. But, happily, greater ecumenical understanding and cooperation was the by-product.<sup>9</sup>

In the third chapter of John's Gospel we have the well-known account of Nicodemus, a person of the center, asking questions of a marginal spiritual leader, an itinerant rabbi from the northern hills of Galilee. The Jewish councilman has enough discernment to recognize that Jesus 'has come from God' and that God is 'with him' (v. 2). But Jesus speaks to him of the necessity of a rebirth through the Spirit for entry into the kingdom of God (vv. 5–8). Jesus charges Nicodemus, who is a representative of the centrist position of privilege, with being a religious teacher who lacks understanding of basic spiritual realities. In other words, the voice from the margins is instructing someone at the center of society. Thus it has often been throughout church history: the Spirit has regularly been most active at the margins. Doubtless the Spirit's preferred spatial positions (or *loci*) have been at the margins, since there the Spirit has found greater receptivity. In a milieu of self-dependence and prideful self-confidence the Spirit's work has been hindered. Thus it seems clear that, for the Spirit of God, the right *dispositions*—an attitude of faith, and a spirit of humility—are essential (Heb. 11:6). Where there has been spiritual hunger, where there has been a seeking after the presence and power of God through earnest, wholehearted prayer and invocation, the Spirit has come. Even though the wind blows where it pleases (Jn. 3:8), this does not negate the truth that the Spirit has preferences as to where to manifest its presence and power, and where to pour out divine blessing. God has good things in store for those

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<sup>9</sup> In this regard Helmut Thielicke, well-known Hamburg pastor and theologian writes: "We learn to know one another only by working together in a common cause. *Then the ecumenical bond of love will be added unto us, as a by-product, as it were, of the really central thing.* It cannot, however, be secured directly." — H. Thielicke, *The Trouble With The Church: A Call for Renewal*. Trans. & Edited by John W. Doberstein (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 83.

who will humbly ask for them (2 Chron. 7:14; Luke 11:13; Acts 2:38, 39). Those who ask will receive (Luke 11:10). It *pleases* the Father, says Jesus, to give us the kingdom and the Spirit (Luke 12:32). To prepare us for the task of preaching the gospel and for witnessing to heaven's Word on earth, God offers us the best—the presence and power of the Spirit. When our asking concords with God's offer, our preaching's effectiveness will surely be optimized: it will be Spirit-empowered and Spirit-directed witness.

## 7.2. The Wish of Moses

In earlier chapters of our discussion we have shown the connection between the Spirit and prophecy. In Numbers 11 there is an interesting account of what occurs when God puts the Spirit that is on Moses on the seventy elders of Israel too. Sixty-eight of these leaders are apparently around the Tent of Meeting, where Moses has convoked them (according to God's direction). Two of the elders, however, have not shown up—they have remained in the camp. When the Spirit comes upon them, they all begin to prophesy at length—including the two who are not there in Moses' presence. When this is reported to Moses, his long-time aide, Joshua, is scandalized and asks Moses to stop them (v. 28). But Moses' reply is immediate and absolutely free of all *Kanzelneid*.<sup>10</sup> Moses says to Joshua: “Are you jealous for my sake? *I wish that all the Lord's people were prophets and that the Lord would put his Spirit on them!*” In other words, Moses (as I understand it) is saying, ‘I long for the day when not only the official leaders who are here in our group will declare the great goodness and the great wonders of God—I long for a time when *all God's people* will be prophets prophesying—*here* at the Tent, *there* in the camp, *everywhere*—under the Spirit's power and direction!’ This earnest desire expressed by Moses anticipates the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy:

And afterward,  
I will pour out my Spirit on all people.  
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,  
your old men will dream dreams,  
your young men will see visions.  
Even on my servants, both men and women,  
I will pour out my Spirit in those days. (2:28, 29)

Recipients of the Spirit's effusion become effective witnesses: the reality and the power resulting from this experience combine to enhance and multiply the missional impact of the church of Jesus Christ.

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<sup>10</sup> The German term for envy regarding (or inordinate jealousy for) one's pulpit.

### 7.3. The Prayer of Jesus

In the final part of the prayer of Jesus recorded in the Fourth Gospel (John 17:20–26) there is no direct reference to the Holy Spirit, but the work of the Spirit is implied throughout. Jesus expresses confidence that people of generations yet to come will believe in him through the witnessing of his disciples. Jesus includes those future believers in his petition. He prays for the unity of the believers who will accept him as Saviour and Messiah. Jesus mentions having given his disciples ‘the glory’ he has received from the Father, in order that this unity will be realized. He speaks of the intimate bond that exists between him and the Father and that is to exist between him and believers. He also mentions a bond that is to unite believers with their fellow believers: in this context he mentions the bond of love (v. 23). In the conclusion of his prayer, reiterating the theme of the Father’s love, Jesus prays as follows: “Righteous Father . . . I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the *love* you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.” This is evidently the ultimate purpose of the prayer—that the love of God and the presence of Jesus may be portrayed to the world through believers united with the Father and the Son through the sanctifying word and Spirit (John 6:63; 17:17–19).

Luke, the charismatic theologian whose writings we have emphasized, puts the all-embracing promise and missional prophecy in one verse in the opening section of his second volume. In Luke’s account these are Jesus’ last words to his followers, spoken just before his ascension. Jesus declares: “[Y]ou will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). The message of salvation through Christ, then, will be spread throughout the world by witnesses who are transformed, empowered and directed by the Holy Spirit.



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**Video Presentation**

Cho, David Yongghi. "Christ's Vision for Your/My Ministry." Lecture given at the Thursday General Session during the *1995 Robert H. Schuller Institute for Successful Church Leadership*, held January 30<sup>th</sup> – February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1995, at the Crystal Cathedral, Garden Grove, CA. Copyright 1995, Crystal Cathedral Ministries.